

A Refutation of the Errors of Separatists

by

English, Partially-Conforming Puritan Ministers

c. 1604–1609

with an

Extended Editor's Introduction

Defending the Lawfulness of Partial-Conformity in Worship & Church
Government (including under Civil Impositions) from Scripture, Westminster
& the Scottish Indulgence Controversy, contra George Gillespie, while Driving
against Denominationalism, for the Unifying of Christ's Church

Reformed Books Online

ReformedBooksOnline.com

May this work help you glorify and enjoy God

Related Books

by Reformed Books Online

Juan Perez, [The Epistle of Consolation to Those Imprisoned by the Inquisition](#) tr. Charles Johnson (1560) 130 pp.

Richard Baxter, [Richard Baxter on Worship & Catholicity against Separatism & John Owen](#) (1684) 87 pp.

George Gillespie, [All of Gillespie's Writings on Christ's Mediatorial Kingdom is the Church Only](#) ed. T. Fentiman 110 pp.

Samuel Rutherford, [Independent Churches do not have the Authority for Greater Excommunication](#) 53 pp. from *The Due Right of Presbyteries* (1644)

Travis Fentiman

[The Civil Government's Authority about Religion & the Church, *Circa Sacra*: An Extended Introduction & a Section from the English Presbyterians' *Divine Right*](#) (1646; 2021) 123 pp.

[1 Corinthians – Head Coverings are Not Perpetual & they were Hair-Buns, with or without Material: Proven](#) (2022) 283 pp.

This work's original title was:

[A Most Grave and Modest Confutation of the Errors of the Sect commonly called Brownists, or Separatists, agreed upon long since by the joint consent of sundry, godly and Learned Ministers of this Kingdom then Standing out and Suffering in the Cause of Nonconformity...](#)
(London: Brewster & Badger, 1644).

The work has been minimally edited. See the original for any textual questions. All footnotes and words in [brackets] are the editor's. This edition of the work, with the Extended Introduction and all prefatory material, has been placed wholly in the public domain, 2025.

Please share this work in any godly way, shape, or form desired.

“This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased;
hear ye Him.”

Mt. 17:5

“Sanctify them through thy truth: thy Word is truth.”

Jn. 17:17

Table of Contents

Editor's Extended Intro

Intro	7
Previews	8
1. Background	13
Perspective	13
Background 1580's	14
Rathband 1644	16
Westminster 1640's	18
2. Principled Partial Conformity in Worship	21
Argument for	21
Gillespie contra Scandalous & Inconvenient Ceremonies 1637	23
Scripture	30
Acts, Rom. 14, 1 Cor. 8	30
Josh. 22, 1 Sam. 8-12; Mt. 12:1-12	39
Word's General Rules, Dt. 4:2	44
A True Principle	47
Nature's Light & Common Experience	49
Separatism & Reforming the Church	51
Conclusion	52
Testimonies & Westminster Standards	56
Reformers, Puritans & Westminster Divines	56
Westminster 1.6, 21.1 & on 2 nd Commandment	65
Applications:	78
Unison Prayers	78
Objections: Will-worship, Facilitating Sin & Non-Weak Christians	83
Responsive Readings	85

Objections: Leading what is Wrong, Confirming Superstition & Interpretive Scandal	89
Working to the Same Goal	92
3. Principled Partial Conformity in Government	94
Church of Scotland under Erastianism & Episcopacy 1660-1688	94
Civil Authority & Dethronement (Cameronianism)	95
Imposed Erastianism & Episcopacy	104
Church Government is Secondary	107
Ministers Accepting the Government Indulgence 1669	110
Indulged, Non-Conforming Ministers	114
Covenanting	118
Conforming Covenanters: Baillie, Honyman, Leighton	123
Indulged Covenanters	128
SL&C: Not Perpetual or Unqualified as a Civil Bond	130
Misrepresentations	131
Indulgence Literature	135
Wamphray's Arguments 1678	139
Wamphray's Arguments 1681	149
Conclusion	158
4. White Towers & Unifying the Church	160
Remaining Separatism in Presbyterianism 1680-1690 ff.	161
"Whereunto we have Already Attained," Phil. 3:15-16	164
White Towers vs. Scripture	165
Westminster & the Scots' catholic Principles	167
Westminster Consistent with Herself	170
Church Unity in Fundamentals is Obliging	171
Too Strong to Help the Weak? & Durham	176
Objections	179
Close	185

A Refutation of the Errors of Separatists

Rathband to the Reader	190
Authors to the Reader	195
1. The Church of England is a True Church	207
They hold our Church and assemblies are false as they:	
1. Were not rightly gathered by the Word	216
2. Use men's inventions: stinted prayers, catechisms and read homilies	221
3. Lack Christ's true discipline and order	228
4. Submit to false and Antichristian discipline by bishops	230
5. Continue in lacks and corruptions, having been convinced of them	233
2. We have a True Ministry in England	241
They hold our ministers are false as:	
1. They are not called to Christ's ordained office, but Antichrist's	243
2. Their entrance is not by Christ's ordinance, but is Antichristian	253
3. Their office's administration is with vows of obedience to bishops	262
4. Their maintenance is Jewish and Antichristian, viz. by tithes, etc.	268
3. Our People are Members of a True Visible Church	276
They hold our people are not members of a true visible Church as they:	
1. Receive the ignorant and profane	277
2. Are not faithful	278
3. Do not cast out the openly profane	280
Conclusion	287
They infer Scripture warrants:	
1. Separation from Anglican assemblies	287
2. Joining the Separatist assemblies	294

Editor's Extended Introduction

Travis Fentiman¹

This book is a one of a kind jewel. Written by a group of unnamed English reformed ministers and others in the early-1600's who had suffered much for non-conformity, it argues against separation from the impure Church of England, as advocated by the Separatists, and lays out faithful, catholic principles true to the Word for how material conformity could and ought to be made righteously and with a pure conscience for much in Christ's Church in England, preserving her as one ([Jn. 17:20-23](#)). These "moderate puritans,"² in laying out their understanding, and that largely of Westminster (as will be seen), in some depth, which is not easily found elsewhere, show that a different practice of Church government is no necessary warrant for separation or a compromise to their own view (which trajectory³ was divine-right presbyterianism). Relevance for today bursts at the seams.

As with most works written by a group of reformed ministers in the seventeenth century, this book is phenomenal, though it be one of the least known. While written against the Separatists, it is a model for its charitable, fair demeanor, moderation, concern for universal truth, positive presentation, clarity, accuracy, theological depth and detail (far beyond most of what is written today) and its solid arguing by demonstrative force from the light of Scripture and nature. Separatistic Christians (you will find yourself in that boat as you read) never had more loving, better and competent disputants directing them into the truth. See if you can resist their argumentation and conclusions from the

¹ Fentiman, MDiv. is the webmaster of [ReformedBooksOnline](#) and lives in Vermont with his wife and four children.

² They are also known as "conforming puritans" and by other labels in the secondary literature. For some of the growing body of that literature on the topic, see 'Historical' at 'On Occasional & Partial Conformity without Sin, or Moderate Puritanism'.

³ It is likely their not using labels or being more explicit in their work is due to (1) their only addressing the points of the Separatists, (2) the consensus nature of their piece, (3) not seeking to divide where it be unnecessary (when there were many views in their context), but addressing each smaller point from the Word where it is relevant, and hence (4) retaining a catholic Christian character.

Word and nature's light. If in doubt, look up the proof-texted Scriptures and you will find more power in the Word and its details than you have before.

This Extended Introduction, about fifty-percent longer than the book itself, will build upon, develop and further argue these moderate puritans' principled partial-conformity outlook (or practicing of accommodation under sufficient justifications when possible or necessary for the greater good) in detail from Scripture and through the history of Westminster, the English presbyterians and the Scottish covenanters. Albeit not a complete Scriptural defense of principled partial-conformity with explanations of every relevant verse, yet some of the leading, substantial lines of thought will be introduced sufficient for the purpose and the fair-minded reader. For more material on the topic, see ['On Occasional & Principled Partial Conformity without Sin, or Moderate Puritanism' \(RBO\)](#).

A prime, non-conforming principle about worship of that Scottish non-conformist *par excellence*, George Gillespie (1637), will be argued against in detail, defending the outlook of most of the Westminster divines and English presbyterians. The later Scottish indulgence controversy (1669-1688) will then be surveyed from the fascinating, untold perspective of the indulged ministers, defending that the Church may, and in many situations ought to comply with undue civil and ecclesiastical impositions in necessity. The whole will drive against the sectarianism⁴ of our evangelical denominationalism, ending with Scriptural, classically reformed and catholic guidance on how to unify Christ's terribly splintered Church.

Preview of the Book

This puritan treatise is most important for its theology: you will learn a lot. Separatists often hijack the lingo of "the true Church," "true ministers," "true worship" and "true Christians," all opposed to false ones, importing their black-and-white separatist errors into them. They put any conformity on par with all conformity. The

⁴ Richard Muller summarizing the Swiss reformed theologian, [Johann F. Stapfer](#) (1708-1775): "Nonfundamental articles are teachings that 'do not pertain to the essence and constitution of religion,' — differences of these articles result not in heresy, but in schism. (Stapfer, *Institutiones theologicae*, I.iv, §1805; v. §1922.)" *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics*, 2nd ed., 4 vols. (Baker Academic, 2003), 1.430.

partial-conformist, English puritan William Rathband published this work in 1644 (though it had been written several decades before) to combat the rising sects and to ground the ministers and people in his own day in the Westminster era. In his “To the Reader” Rathband says the Separatists act:

“as if there were no middle [path] between separation from (1) the Church and the true worship thereof and (2) subscription unto or practice or approbation of all the corruptions in the same...”

Taking that right middle course when others gravitate and depart to the extremes often brings one under the condemnation of every side, as the puritan authors expected. Thus in their “To the Reader,” the ministers address humbly, faithfully, compassionately and plainly (in a model for such dealings): (1) the Separatists themselves, (2) Christians that may be unduly influenced by them, (3) stronger Christians that will be confirmed by their writing and instruction, and (4) their ministerial fathers and brethren (and opposites) who will look down on them for acknowledging the Church’s corruptions and engaging the Separatists at all.

In the book’s first part about the Church, the ministers, in light of separatist misconstruals, solidly and insightfully show from Scripture what a true Church is, how a person can recognize one and how far a Church may remain so despite severe defects and backsliding (the cited Scriptures will likely ram right through your own preconceptions). Separatists tend to magnify lesser truths into virtual fundamentals of the faith, without saying they’re doing so. Our authors prove not every Scriptural truth is fundamental.

Incidentally the ministers include not only a defense of the lawfulness of stinted forms for public church prayers (while giving place for free prayer), but give a most persuasive case for their positive value from Scripture precedents (which are hard to argue with). They also contend for the lawfulness and benefit of confessions and catechisms (which the Separatists rejected). The ministers additionally take up that timelessly important question: How far individuals are obliged unto public reformation? with an answer from Scripture (and other reformed divines in an editorial footnote) that will challenge you. Through the whole the authors write from an orthodox perspective

of the magistrate's authority around religion,⁵ despite the then magistrate's abuses therein.

The second part about Church government shows how Christ yet governs his Church under and through significantly defective Church government, how the ministerial calling and conferral of ordination is preserved therein and how far the ministry may retain its essential character and authority despite great declension. The ministers demonstrate from Scripture and right reason how an unbiblical Church office may yet be undergirded by a biblical office and authority, and even further, how far persons may righteously cooperate under and with unbiblical Church officers (such as bishops).

The partially-conforming ministers reveal how they handled the imposition of undue worship ordinances and they profoundly treat how far compliance may be yielded to unscriptural Church government and undue civil impositions (which is farther than you realize), without sacrificing one's principles. Their material, qualified compliance was precisely due to their catholic (universal), Christian principles, which necessitate it. The authors also defend a Christian magistrate financially providing for the Gospel-ministry through taxing a visibly Christian people (even the ungodly therein), as occurred in that era in England, and this not from Levitical tithing.

Part three, about Christians, shows how visible Christians remain such under defective Churches and how ministers can operate in a Church which will not allow them to exercise full, divine-right, Biblical Church government or discipline, even in regard to scandalous persons in their congregations. In the Conclusion, amongst other things, the ministers argue from Scripture against "private persons" being "allowed to interpret the Scriptures publicly" in church "assemblies".⁶ They also argue that in a Church upholding the Faith's fundamentals, separation is not necessary due to other Christians' sins (despite Bible verses sometimes used to that end) and that separatists often end up being more deformed than the churches they left as their principles and tendencies don't tend toward spiritual health or the peace and well-ordering of any church.

⁵ For that perspective see Travis Fentiman, *The Civil Government's Authority about Religion & the Church, Circa Sacra: An Extended Introduction & a Section from the English Presbyterians' Divine Right* (ReformedBooksOnline, 2021). The one place the authors express a difference, or speak ambiguously and not as accurately, is noted below.

⁶ This ought to be qualified by ordinary circumstances and other factors; see 'Teachers, Elders, Deacons & Laymen may Publicly Preach in Necessity' at 'Preaching' (RBO), 'May a Person Teach Christianity who is not Ordained?' at 'The Office of Teacher or Doctor' (RBO) and 'On an Extraordinary Calling' (RBO).

Preview of the Extended Intro

This extended intro in part one, after giving some perspective on Separatism, will provide background to the history and main parties involved in the book, including Rathband. It is little known or considered that most of the Westminster divines remained within the Church of England, at least partially conforming thereto in government and worship, out of conscience, upon pain of ministerial deprivation.⁷

Part two will argue for principled, partial, material conformity in worship in some circumstances. Gillespie came to the fore in that era at the opposite end of the spectrum, a fundamental and unifying principle for him being that “we can never lawfully conform (no not in the case of [ministerial] deprivation) unto any ceremony which is scandalous and inconvenient in the use of it.” This principle will be seen to be inherently separatistic, especially in light of reforming the Church. Partial conformity in worship in some circumstances will be seen to be evidenced and allowed and taught by Scripture in the [book of Acts](#), [Rom. 14](#), [1 Cor. 8](#), [Josh. 22](#), [1 Sam. 8-12](#), [Mt. 12:1-12](#); [Dt. 4:2](#) and by the Word’s general rules and right reason, defending the theological outlook of over forty-five documented reformers, puritans and Westminster divines et al.

The Westminster standards will be shown with documentation to allow for partial conformity, as well as quite a variety of significantly differing views on worship, including that of mainline Anglicanism, through the “deceptive clarity” of Westminster’s language and their consensus context and process. Two applications will be given regarding participating in and leading unison prayers and regular responsive readings in public worship, while answering objections to partial conformity. Then the historical narrative will be taken up again, highlighting working towards the same goal.

Part three narrates the intriguing and often surprising untold story and theological defense of the partially conforming indulged Scottish ministers. With the restoration of Scotland’s king in 1660 the civil government and bishops were established over the Church (a.k.a Erastianism and episcopacy). The development of the next two decades is nearly always told by presbyterians from the perspective of “the Covenanters,” held to be the non-conforming field-preachers who protested the king’s indulgences. These

⁷ Documentation of these and further points will be provided below.

indulgences were conceded civil appointments for certain non-conforming ministers to preach and minister in the parish churches, with some restrictions. To comply with such civil restrictions is often held to compromise Christ's crown rights over his Church.

To the contrary, as there are examples of Biblical saints (even Christ Himself) righteously acting under and complying with Erastian dictators, the position that charge maintains, itself compromises Christ's crown rights (as if the interventions of Erastian dictators could alter or remove them). The Scriptural reasons for the indulged ministers' actions (including from a plethora of minutely parallel Scriptural precedents) will be set to light, showing they had and exercised a much more detailed, accurate and profound understanding and application of theological principles than the ministers who opposed the indulgences, such as that ultra-non-conformist, John Brown of Wamphray. Wamphray's principal arguments will be surveyed and shown to be mistaken and often contrary to Scripture.

Through the narrative the Church's ability and (often) wisdom (or even obligation) to comply with civil governments' undue impositions under necessity will be uncovered and investigated, and Church government (albeit of divine-right) will be proven to be a secondary doctrine and practice. A just, honest, historic and not simplistic view of the [Solemn League and Covenant](#) (SL&C, 1643) and covenanting in that era will be surveyed (drawing on some of the latest historical research), supporting this whole trajectory. The many diverse and opposite parties that could and did swear to the [SL&C](#) will be documented, such as non-conformists, partial-conformists, conformists, royalists, non-royalists, presbyterians, Erastians, episcopalians, independents and those who thought Church government not to be of divine-right, the wording of the [SL&C](#) being in accord with all of these.

Some of the last field-preachers, the Cameronians (nearly unsurpassed Separatists),⁸ claimed in 1680 that the king, despite retaining the nation's consent as their king, had lost all civil authority. Many since have claimed that the Scottish nation casting off their (following) king in 1689 for trampling fundament laws of the kingdom, essentially vindicated the principles of the Cameronians. On the contrary, it will be documented the Scottish nation acted upon and upheld the dominant reformed view of dethroning

⁸ See '[On the Separatism of the Cameronians](#)' at '[On Cameronianism](#)' (RBO).

tyrants, especially as delineated by Samuel Rutherford in *Lex Rex* (1644), contrary to the Cameronians' erroneous principles.

In part four the remaining separatist trajectory within Presbyterianism, around the time of the political toleration of the more sound protestant denominations in England in 1690, will be noted. This toleration, by what is in the heart of man, could only facilitate and cement denominations remaining separate, giving rise to modern denominationalism. In seeking the healing of denominationalism through truth, [Phil. 3:15-16](#), a text often used by separatists, "Whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule," will be cleared from their misinterpretation and vindicated.

Lastly, the wrong-headedness of erecting denominational white towers will be manifested, in contrast to unifying Christ's Church through the catholic principles of Scripture, Westminster, the Scots and the London presbyterians. Organic Church unity in (at least) Christianity's fundamentals, resulting in Christ's Church being one in the land, will be seen to oblige from God's Word, as the post-apostolic early Church, many of the reformed, the London presbyterians and the Scottish covenanter James Durham taught, it being no sin, but a divine obligation for the stronger to help the weaker (though they relinquish rights and privileges for the here now to do so). Theological treasures are yours for the harvesting; take up and read!

1. Background:

Perspective

The question of separation is often one of perspective. It is not hard to list out all the defects and deficiencies of a Church from the Word, as Separatists are keen on doing. Yet doing so takes one's eyes off the positive Christian principles and virtues the Church yet has in it, which one would find more profit in making into a list. Both lists, with opposite parties' eyes on either, could be equally true, yet positive Christian principles are more foundational and binding grounds for union by the Word than superadded defects and

errors.⁹ Likewise, a plethora of seemingly conclusive criticisms may be heaped up against a controversial practice without persons ever knowing, or caring to find out, the original or best reasons for it, which, when known, may not only be tolerable, but one may find the practice able to be accommodated and performed under those reasons (or others) without hindering unity. Separation presupposes and is founded on unity. Unity, of its nature, is not built on separation or dependent on it. The errors and deficiencies one materially tolerates and accommodates for the time and circumstances under necessity, for the higher good in love, overlooking a multitude of sins (1 Pet. 4:8), without approving them, versus what one believes and the standard one seeks to reform unto, namely the spotless Word of God, are two different things which may consist with each other.

Answer this question: Over matters less than tending to overturn fundamentals or the power of godliness, between (1) those who condemn, won't materially conform for nearly anything and separate out of principle upon perceived necessity to set up their own church, outward government, worship and ministry as perfect as they can, versus (2) those who over the long-haul sacrificially bear under what they are able to defer to, act as salt, strengthen and build up Christ's people in the main things and seek to reform Christ's Body to the Word, while maintaining her unity: Who is most faithful to the most important, fundamental and weightiest, and hence binding, Christian principles, exercising the greater love to God and man (Mt. 22:36-39)? If denominationalism, or sectarianism, is ever to be healed, as Jesus prays (Mt. 6:10; Jn. 17:20-23), it must be along the latter lines; our ministers' book contains essential principles towards that end.

Background to the Book

This puritan treatise was written in dark days for presbyterianism in the early-1600's. As the work speaks of [King James I](#), who began to reign in 1604, and yet does not mention

⁹ [James Durham](#): "...union has the advantage over division, because: 1. It is a commanded mean tending to edification, which division is not. 2. Division has no less nor fewer inconveniencies following it, nor [is] less destructive to the Church than union in the case supposed; yea, schism is one of the greatest hurts that can come to an orthodox Church, it being next to heresy in doctrine; and therefore no particular evil can be laid in the balance with it. 3. The ills of division are most inevitable, for the ills that follow union, through God's blessing, may be prevented; it is not impossible, but in the way of division it is, because itself is out of God's way." *The Dying Man's Testament to the Church of Scotland, or a Treatise concerning Scandal...* (Edinburgh: Higgins, 1659), pt. 4, [ch. 7](#), p. 323.

the significant separatist work written by [John Robinson](#) in 1610, it was probably written between those dates.¹⁰ The authors likely declined to add their names to the work in order (1) to avoid ecclesiastical and civil repercussions for (modestly) noting numerous of the Anglican Church's corruptions, (2) to let the truth and arguments speak for themselves and (3) to promote peace.

The first prominent seceder from the Church of England was Robert Browne.¹¹ He had been influenced by the presbyterian Thomas Cartwright and had walked in puritan circles, though he was not yet a minister. However, by 1581 Browne set up a church on congregationalist principles and in 1582 published *A Treatise of Reformation without Tarrying for Any*.¹² He boasted of being imprisoned thirty-two times; in some instances he could not see his hand at noon-day. Our authors never mention him, perhaps because, seeing the errors of (some of) his ways, Browne went back to the Church of England and was ordained a minister therein in 1591, though he continued at times to exercise non-conformity. Browne's followers who continued in Separation, and often all Separatists in England, were called Brownists, whom our authors mention.

John Greenwood,¹³ an Anglican minister, embraced Brownism in 1585 and renounced his previous Anglican ordination as "wholly unlawful." In 1586 he became the recognized leader of the underground London Separatist church,¹⁴ which had been in continuance since the second half of the 1560's. By 1587 Greenwood was in prison. In that same year Henry Barrow¹⁵ sought to refute one of Browne's books and instead became persuaded of it. He linked up with Greenwood in prison, becoming likewise imprisoned. Both Barrow and Greenwood wrote multiple works for Separation, which

¹⁰ [James Wood](#), a Scottish covenanting minister: "even in the time that prelates possessed their government, sound presbyterians, as with the one hand they did fight against prelates, the corrupt officers, so did they at that same time with the other hand against Separatists... maintaining the churches of England to be true churches from whose communion it was not lawful to separate. Witness amongst sundry others that grave and judicious piece written by sundry non-conform divines jointly in the times of prelates and published by Mr. Rathband, anno 1604." *A Little Stone, Pretended to be out of the Mountain, Tried & Found to be a Counterfeit...* (Edinburgh: Anderson, 1654), pt. 2, §12, p. 345.

¹¹ [Robert Browne](#) (c. 1550–1633). For more on Browne and the Brownists, see Daniel Neal, *The History of the Puritans...* new ed. in 5 vols. (London: Baynes & Son, 1822), vol. 1, ch. 6, pp. 301–14.

¹² Browne, *A Treatise of Reformation without Tarrying for Anie*, ed. T.G. Crippen for the Congregational Historical Society (1582; London: Congregational Union of England & Wales, 1903).

¹³ [John Greenwood](#) (1556–1593)

¹⁴ See Wikipedia: "[London underground church](#)". John Knox did not support their separation from the Church of England: Albert Peel, *The First Congregational Churches: New Light on Separatist Congregations in London 1567–1581* (Cambridge: University Press, 1920), "[Their Relations with John Knox](#)", pp. 16–19.

¹⁵ [Henry Barrow](#) (c. 1550–1593)

our authors use for refutation. Barrow beget the Barrowists, only a hair different from the Brownists proper. In 1593 both Barrow and Greenwood were hanged for “devising and circulating seditious books.” Their influence continued though their followers through the first half of the 1600’s, as our authors’ work testifies, though hindered by civil sanctions.

William Rathband

Things greatly changed with the onset of the Long Parliament in 1640. By 1641 Parliament eliminated the Court of High Commission and the Star Chamber, effectively dismantling episcopal power, their prosecution of non-conformists and their tight censorship of the press under king Charles I. In 1642 open civil war broke out between the king and Parliament, causing dramatic social upheaval and, consequently, the flourishing of unrestrained, rising religious sects and separatists, able to print their errors and heresies at will. In light of this temptation toward Separation during a time of social upheaval, in the face of the Separatists’ claims, William Rathband published our authors’ piece as a guide in 1644, when the Westminster Assembly sat and Church government for the nation was seeking to be re-formed according to the Word.

Rathband¹⁶ had been a minister for 19 years in a chapel at Lancashire. Chapels had less direct and strict oversight by the bishops, allowing non-conformists to more easily practice therein. It is recorded that he here exercised his ministry “contrary to law” and was “much persecuted” during this time, before being “silenced,” which censure Rathband did not wholly submit to.

Rathband had a history of observing and arguing against the Separatists. It was obvious the puritans of the Massachusetts Bay Company that landed in New England in 1630 were *not* Separatists. Yet within seven years puritans in Old England heard rumors

¹⁶ William Rathband’s dates are unknown. His last name is also sometimes spelled “Rathbone”. On his life (and his two sons) see Benjamin Brook, *The Lives of the Puritans*, 3 vols. (London: Black, 1813), vol. 2, pp. 470–71; James Reid, *Memoirs of the Lives & Writings of those Eminent Divines, who Convened in the Famous Assembly at Westminster* (Paisley: Young, 1811), pp. 125–26. Rathband is often confused with his son, William Rathband (†1695) of Highgate, also a minister in the 1640’s. It was most likely the father who published the present work as Rathband’s “To the Reader” evidences that he was a mature minister during the 1630’s.

that their brethren in New England had started to follow the Separatists' ways. In 1637 English puritans initiated a formal correspondence with their brethren in the New World, asking their opinions about nine propositions. The New Englanders replied in 1639, much to their brethren's dismay. While the New England puritans had not adopted "the ways of rigid separation," they had become separatistic enough. The English, moderate puritan, [John Ball](#), wrote a response and correction to their new views in 1640. Rathband and Simeon Ashe (a partially-conforming Westminster divine), collected these three works and published them together in 1643.¹⁷

The year before, in 1642, Rathband had co-signed with Simeon Ashe and three others the preface to a book by Ball against "John Can, the leader of the English Brownists in Amsterdam."¹⁸ They wrote to defend the now deceased Ball from aspersions, arguing that he had not declined "from his former inconformity," despite the accusation that he was "too much inclined to favor the times in our ceremonies and Service-book." Nor had Ball advanced "beyond the wonted [accustomed] limits of a Nonconformist towards the cause and course of Separation." Here is what Rathband and the signers endorse of Ball:

"he lived and died a strict forbearer and firm opposer of all such corruptions as the Nonconformists (hereunto so usually called) had commonly by their public writings disallowed.¹⁹ Nor have we known any man in that kind more precise, uniform and constant to his opinion in discourse, prayers and practices, yet always carried on with Christian moderation and meekness...

we have almost fifty [other] sheets of paper written with his own hand, wherein many passages express his continued dislike of the separations, both then and now in practice..."²⁰

¹⁷ On the whole of this paragraph see Sang H. Ahn, [Covenant in Conflict: The Controversy over the Church Covenant between Samuel Rutherford & Thomas Hooker](#), PhD diss. (Grand Rapids, MI: Calvin Theological Seminary, 2011), pp. 54–57. For the three works: [A Letter of Many Ministers in Old England requesting the judgement of their reverend brethren in New England concerning nine positions written Anno Dom. 1637: together with their answer thereunto returned, anno 1639: and the reply made unto the said answer and sent over unto them, anno 1640](#), eds. William Rathband & Simeon Ashe (London: Thomas Underhill, 1643).

¹⁸ "To the Christian Reader" in John Ball, *An Answer to Two Treatises of Mr. John Can, the Leader of the English Brownists in Amsterdam...* (London: R.B., 1642).

¹⁹ This likely refers to ministers wearing the surplice (a white garment) during worship services, using the sign of a cross in baptism and kneeling (or requiring this) in receiving the Lord's Supper, amongst possibly other things.

²⁰ Ball, *Answer to Two Treatises*, "To the Reader", [here](#) and [here](#).

Rathband continued his opposition to separatistic tendencies in publishing his own fifty-five page work in 1644, documenting the church principles and practices of the New England congregationalists, noting their significant similarity to those of the Separatists.²¹

Rathband had a son, also a minister, named William Rathband (†1695) of Highgate. It is not clear which one preached before Parliament at their solemn fast on July 31, 1644 from [Jer. 7:3](#), “Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, ‘Amend your ways and your doings, and I will cause you to dwell in this place.’” The son was a Westminster divine “who gave constant attendance” at the Assembly²² and was later barred from the ministry in the Great Ejection of puritan ministers in 1662.²³

Westminster

It is inexplicable to many that almost all the Westminster divines (including the many divine-right presbyterians among them) conformed in some measure within the Anglican Church. Richard Baxter wrote, “before 1640 there were few [English ministers] but conformists... and... all the Westminster Assembly, save eight [i.e. the congregationalists], were such.”²⁴ This is confirmed by further sources.²⁵

²¹ Rathband, *A Brief Narration of Some Church Courses held in Opinion & Practice in the churches lately erected in New England: Collected out of sundry of their own printed papers... Together with... their correspondence with the like tenets and practices of the Separatists’ churches* (London: Brewster, 1644).

²² He was a superadded divine in place of “Morely, who failed to attend”: Alexander F. Mitchell, *The Westminster Assembly: its History & Standards* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1884), [xix](#); William M. Hetherington, *History of the Westminster Assembly of Divines* (Edinburgh: Gemmell & Bridge, 1878), ch. 2, [p. 106](#); Neal, *History of the Puritans*, [3.48](#).

²³ 1662 brought many more stringent requirements upon ministers than previously, including that every minister “declare his unfeigned assent and consent to everything contained in the Book of Common Prayer,” with all its impurities. Thomas M’Crie, *Annals of English Presbytery* (London: Nisbet, 1872), [p. 232](#). Hence many non-conformist writers after 1662 refer to that period as the “New Conformity,” to distinguish it (in light of opponents’ arguments) from the righteous example of the partial-conformists of the previous eras.

²⁴ Richard Baxter, *Catholic Communion Doubly Defended by Dr. Owen’s Vindicator & Richard Baxter...* (London: Parkhurst, 1684), [section 2](#), [p. 13](#).

²⁵ “There were many Church-ministers before the civil wars whom the [bishop of Spalato](#) first called ‘Conformable puritans’; these made up a great part of the Assembly of divines... Dr. Seaman, Dr. Cornelius Burgess, Mr. Anthony Burgess, Mr. Case, Dr. Tuckney, Dr. Corbet, Mr. Samuel Hildersham, Mr. Edmund

How could this be? The divines, Baxter says elsewhere, “thought conformity lawful in case of [ministerial] deprivation, but the things imposed to be a snare, which should be removed if it could be lawfully done...”²⁶ Thus the consensus²⁷ [Preface](#) to Westminster’s “Directory for the Publick Worship of God,” in reflecting on the Anglican Liturgy, does not speak of it (or any of the controverted ceremonies in it) as inherently sinful,²⁸ but the Preface’s thrust is that the Liturgy and aspects of it, and consequences from it, were inconvenient, burdensome and “a matter of endless strife and contention in the Church, and a snare,” the Liturgy being essentially a cause of scandal to many.²⁹ The

Calamy, etc. were of this number.” James Owen, *Moderation Still a Virtue* (London: Taylor, 1704), pp. 43–44. The following divines who sat at Westminster filled the following Anglican offices at one time:

Bishop: Brownrigg, Reynolds, Westfield;

Proctor: Ford;

Prebendary: Ley, Lightfoot;

Church Rector: Arrowsmith, Baylie, A. Burgess, C. Burgess, Burroughs, A. Byfield, R. Byfield, Bowles, Calamy, J. Carter, Case, Cawdrey, Chambers, Cheynell, Coleman, Conant, Corbet, Downing, Featley, Ford, Gammon, Gataker, Gipps, Gouge, Greenhill, Harris, Herle, Hill, Hodges, Ley, Lightfoot, Mewe, Newcomen, Nye, Palmer, Proffet, Reynolds, Strong, Taylor, Thorowgood, Vines, Walker, White;

Curate: Bolton, Bridge, A. Byfield, Calamy, J. Carter, Case, Cheynell, Goodwin, Newcomen, Simpson; Parson: Cheynell, Jackson;

Vicar: Arrowsmith, Ashe, A. Burgess, C. Burgess, Calamy, Cheynell, Crosse, Downing, Goodwin, Greenhill, Hickes, Hoyle, Marshall, Palmer, Sedgwick, Spurstowe, Twisse, Young;

Archdeacon: Conant; Deacon: Marshall;

Sub-Deacon: Ley;

Canon: Corbet, Crosse, Wilkinson.

Wallis was a “steady conformist... till his death.” This list was mainly compiled from comparing Reid, *Memoirs* with Westminster Assembly Project, “[Assembly Members](#)”.

Instances of non-conformity in the English divines occur in Reid, *Memoirs* in the accounts of (not exhaustive): Ashe, Bridge, A. Burgess, C. Burgess, Burroughs, R. Byfield, Calamy, Cawdrey, Conant, Corbet, Ford, Gibson, Goodwin, Greene, Herle, Hickes, Marshall, Newcomen, Nye, Palmer, Seaman, Simpson, Spurstowe, Staunton, Twisse, Valentine, Walker, Whitaker, Wilkinson, Wilson, Young.

²⁶ “The Assembly of Divines at Westminster were men that had lived in Conformity, except about eight or nine of them and the Scots: But being such as thought Conformity lawful in case of deprivation, but the things imposed to be a snare, which should be removed if it could be lawfully done...” “That the Westminster Assembly, as is said, came thither almost all Conformists.” Baxter, *The Nonconformists’ Plea for Peace* (London, 1679), 7. ‘[Some Matters of Fact Preparatory](#)’, §3, pp. 127 & 138.

²⁷ The committee for the Preface of the “Directory for the Publick Worship of God” consisted of: “Goodwin, Nye, Bridge, Burgess, Reynolds, Vines, Marshall, and Dr Temple, together with the Scottish ministers.” Hetherington, *Westminster Assembly*, p. 174. Some of these persons, numerous of which were Independents, and the Scots, as well as other divines, may have held parts of the Liturgy, or aspects of it, to have been inherently sinful, but the whole Assembly did not agree to state that in its public declaration.

²⁸ This is confirmed by the presbyterian Thomas Edwards, *Antapologia, or a Full Answer to the Apologetical Narration* (London: G.M., 1644), pp. 15-16.

²⁹ [Preface](#) of Westminster’s “Directory for the Publick Worship of God”: “...the Liturgy hath been a great means, as on the one hand to make and increase an idle and unedifying ministry, which contented itself with set forms made to their hands by others, without putting forth themselves to exercise the gift of prayer, with which our Lord Jesus Christ pleaseth to furnish all his servants whom he calls to that office:

Preface stops short of saying the Liturgy contained error or superstition, but only that “in these latter times... God vouchsafeth to his people more and better means for the discovery of error and superstition...” Such named error and superstition could have been, according to an allowable reading of the Preface, in the people’s opinions and use of the Liturgy rather than necessarily in the Liturgy itself. In addition “the Liturgy hath been” *de facto* (not necessarily *de jure*) “a great means... to make and increase an idle and unedifying ministry...” Most of the divines thought these ill characteristics and effects of the Liturgy could be borne with. Nearly all of them (the congregationalists included) used the Liturgy, or one like it, to a great, or at least some extent even when they could have done otherwise.³⁰

Our authors’ book gives a rare view into their background understanding, expounding that viewpoint’s underpinnings at length. An even more in-depth and detailed defense of that general perspective, held by a large share of the reformers,³¹ would be given shortly after our author’s book in 1618, by the pious partial-conformist, John Sprint, in his treatise, *Cassander Anglicanus, showing the Necessity of Conformity to*

so, on the other side, it hath been (and ever would be, if continued) a matter of endless strife and contention in the Church, and a snare both to many godly and faithful ministers, who have been persecuted and silenced upon that occasion, and to others of hopeful parts, many of which have been, and more still would be, diverted from all thoughts of the ministry to other studies; especially in these latter times, wherein God vouchsafeth to his people more and better means for the discovery of error and superstition, and for attaining of knowledge in the mysteries of godliness, and gifts in preaching and prayer."

³⁰ Baxter: "All the congregations of the non-conformists in England that I have heard (save one now broken, not counting such as Quakers, etc.) have used, and do use, stinted, imposed forms of worship to this day [in 1684], and therefore judge it not unlawful, merely as forms or as imposed." Baxter, *Richard Baxter on Worship & Catholicity against Separatism & John Owen* (1684; ReformedBooksOnline.com, 2024), pp. 19–20.

³¹ See the many reformers quoted or paraphrased in John Sprint, *Cassander Anglicanus, showing the Necessity of Conformity to the Prescribed Ceremonies of our Church, in Case of Deprivation* (London: Bill, 1618), "Reformed Practices", "practice", pp. 159–211. Many of the reformers to this effect may also be found under 'Writings & Quotes' at 'Vestments, Black Genevan Gowns, Collars & Dress for Public Worship' (RBO). An early and influential presbyterian proponent in England of this trajectory was the English minister *Edward Dering* (c. 1540–1576), a supporter of Cartwright. Dering's answers to the authorities "reveal avowedly presbyterian opinion, veiled behind what were to become the distinctive features of the moderate puritan position. Hence, Dering allowed an area of adiaphora in externals and spoke as though the issues raised by the continuing use of the prayer book could usefully be discussed under that heading. However, his endorsement of the liturgy was limited to a grudging acceptance of the basic legal requirement as he saw it. At present the prayer book was too similar to popery and too lax in its allowance of a mere reading ministry to allow him to subscribe without qualification... while he accepted the inherent indifference of the ceremonies in question, he remained obstinately committed to the fine details of the puritan critique of the liturgy and reserved the right to criticise the present liturgical arrangements most severely on the grounds of expediency and edification. This... became typical of the stance adopted by moderate puritans and presbyterians who were unwilling to allow themselves to be deprived over mere externals but who yet refused simply to conform." Lake, *Moderate Puritans*, p. 20.

the Prescribed Ceremonies of our Church in Case of Deprivation.³² If the majority of our reformers and the Westminster divines were not right in the main on this issue, then they were greatly wrong. This extended intro's second part will demonstrate they were not wrong.

2. Partial Conformity in Worship:

Argument for, Testimonies to,
Westminster Standards, Applications

Argument for Principled Partial Conformity

The lawfulness of principled partial conformity under sufficient necessity will be manifested through the following substantial (albeit not comprehensive) argument of 35 pages, which will focus on public worship, though it will conclude with respect to Church

³² John Sprint (d. 1623) had been a non-conformist minister who had refused and protested the controverted ceremonies. When pressed to conform on them, with the alternative of deposition, Sprint searched more into the subject; his book was the result: *Cassander Anglicanus, showing the Necessity of Conformity to the Prescribed Ceremonies of our Church in Case of Deprivation* (London: Bill, 1618). Cassander is a reference to Georg Cassander (1513–1566) and his conciliatory Church views. Ames: "Howsoever there be many unknown motives which lead men in these days unto conformity, yet those which are openly professed, may be referred either unto Mr. Sprint's way, who confesses the ceremonies to be imposed contrary unto the rules of God's Word, and yet contends that they are to be used in case of deprivation: or else to Dr. Morton's way, who avouches the said ceremonies to be agreeable unto the rules of God's Word, and therefore such as ought to be observed simply." *A Reply to Dr. Morton's General Defence of Three Nocent Ceremonies...* ([Amsterdam: Thorp,] 1622), *Preface*.

John Burges (1563–1635), who responded to this work of Ames (at the time the work was anonymous), also defended the general outlook of the Westminster divines, that the ceremonies were inconvenient (and possibly worse), but could be conformed to in such circumstances: *An Answer Rejoined to that much Applauded Pamphlet of a Nameless Author, bearing this Title: viz. A Reply to Dr. Morton's General Defence of Three Nocent Ceremonies...* (London: Matthewes, 1631). Ames responded to this work of Burges (his father-in-law) in his well known, *A Fresh Suit against Human Ceremonies in God's Worship. Or a Triplication unto D. Burges, his Rejoinder for Dr. Morton...* ([Amsterdam] 1633), and took the ceremonies as inherently unlawful in worship.

Previous to Sprint, Laurence Chaderton (1536–1640) in the same vein as the Westminster divines, had prepared notes of a full sermon in the 1590's, "*De licitis*," "On Lawful Things". For a sketch of his argument, see: Peter Lake, *Moderate Puritans & the Elizabethan Church* (Cambridge University Press, 1982), pp. 244–47.

government as well. After the context is set with Gillespie's principle of non-conformity to inconvenient and (even in part) scandalous ceremonies, leading Scriptural precedents and lines of argument for partial conformity to exactly that will be analyzed from Christians submitting to and performing burdensome ceremonies in [Acts](#), conforming to erroneous, religious rites of weak Christians in [Rom. 14](#) (with [1 Cor. 8](#)), the toleration of the Altar of Ed in [Josh. 22](#), Samuel's coronation of Saul in [1 Sam. 8-12](#), the example of Jesus, David and the priests in [Mt. 12:1-12](#), the Word's general rules and with respect to "You shall not add to the Word" in [Dt. 4:2](#).

Then a true principle, in alternative to Gillespie's, will be set forth and confirmed, besides from Scripture, from nature's light and common experience, while rightly synthesizing foundational theological and Scriptural principles (which some persons get backwards). The very real implications of all this will be brought under the spotlight in painful clarity in coming to the inevitable fork in the road between the ability to reform the Church of her impurities from within, versus the necessity of separation (and Separatism). The conclusion to this section will further develop the issues with greater accuracy, while giving precise, practical principles for handling partial conformity to impurities in the Church and in setting limits thereabout.

Following this argument testimonies to partial conformity will be documented from over forty-five reformers, puritans and Westminster divines (amongst others). Next the "deceptive clarity" of the Westminster standards on the issues will be revealed, with documentation of the surprisingly diverse and contrary views of proponents that could all affirm (and vote for) Westminster's ambiguous language and grammar (even mainline Anglicans, as documented). Hence the standards allow for partial conformity (which should not be surprising, given the divines' background and personal practices). Lastly, application with in-depth theological analysis will be made to the (select) issues of unison prayers and responsive readings in worship, especially for ministers leading, while answering objections to practical partial conformity (especially for leaders of worship).

After this part three will defend partial conformity in Church government, even under undue civil impositions, through setting forth the little-known story of the partially conforming, Scottish indulged ministers and their remarkably strong Scriptural and theological arguments. Part four will turn to unifying Christ's one Church.

Gillespie's Principle against Scandalous & Inconvenient Ceremonies

The Scottish minister [George Gillespie](#), who would later become a Westminster divine, wrote a very influential broadside against a number of the English ceremonies in 1637, catapulting what is known as the Scottish Second Reformation (1638). As esteemed as his book has been, the older [Robert Baillie](#) (also one of the later Scottish commissioners to Westminster), spoke of it as deriving from “that side” of things and that “This same youth... I admire... though I mislike much of his matter.”³³

Gillespie put forth a principle which ties his whole book together and was a main pillar for that movement:³⁴

“The position therefore which we maintain against Mr. Sprint, and from which we will not depart the breadth of one nail, is this, that we³⁵ can never lawfully conform (no not in the case of [ministerial] deprivation) unto any ceremony which is scandalous and inconvenient in the use of it.”³⁶

This principle, after it is unpacked and explained (with all due honor to that great man), despite Gillespie's one-sided arguments, will be shown to be patently false,³⁷ first from Scripture, then from nature's light and unavoidable common experience. To explain the principle and give some context:

³³ Robert Baillie, *The Letters & Journals of Robert Baillie*, 3 vols. (Edinburgh: Bannatyne Club, 1841), 1.90.

³⁴ All that I have seen from Samuel Rutherford is concordant with Gillespie's principle and trajectory, though I have not seen Rutherford expressly affirm Gillespie's principle in so many words. Rutherford: “This is the crime of conformity which I wish were publicly repented, by all which have defiled themselves with submitting to an Antichristian government and the will-worship of men...” *The Due Right of Presbyteries...* (London: Griffin, 1644), pt. 2, [ch. 4](#), §5, p. 194. Our authors' book will explicitly defend against Rutherford's charge below.

³⁵ One may wonder whether Gillespie's use of the first-person plural limited his principle as only applicable to his own context, and hence allowed that persons in other times and contexts might conform to a scandalous and inconvenient ceremony. Yet Gillespie's arguments to establish his principle are not limited to his context, but apply universally without distinction of time or context. Hence Gillespie's arguments argue against anyone ever conforming to a scandalous and inconvenient ceremony.

³⁶ George Gillespie, *A Dispute against the English-Popish Ceremonies...* ([Leiden] 1637), pt. 2, [ch. 1](#), p. 9.

³⁷ All of Gillespie's arguments against Sprint cannot be here addressed, nor is Sprint faultless, nor are all the English ceremonies being here white-washed, defended, excused or held as lawful to be done. The only main point here made is that Gillespie's principle does not hold. That being the case, that his principle is false, has wide-ranging implications.

(1) The term “ceremony” in that era was used broadly,³⁸ even by Gillespie (and divines he quotes) in his own treatise³⁹ (and another of his),⁴⁰ it being capable of referring to virtually any public, Church action (including divinely ordained ones).⁴¹ Gillespie often uses the term synonymously with “rites” throughout his tome, and one place in Gillespie makes clear what sorts of things he included under the umbrella of “rites,” namely, again, nearly any public worship or ecclesiastical action.⁴²

(2) In his further explanation Gillespie allows this principle to apply to things indifferent in their nature, being inherently neither good nor bad. Yet (as Gillespie agrees) such indifferent things in their rational exercise are, and must be, good or bad, in different ways and degrees, based on their ends and circumstances.⁴³ Notwithstanding, though Gillespie doesn’t clearly affirm it, we still often talk about

³⁸ See throughout ‘[On the Ordinances, Order & Policy of the Church](#)’ (RBO) as well as the section on the page, ‘[On the Use of the Word ‘Ceremonies’ Below](#)’.

³⁹ e.g. *Dispute*, pt. 1, [ch. 6](#), p. 20; pt. 2, [ch. 5](#), p. 23; [ch. 9](#), pp. 47–48; pt. 3, [ch. 7](#), p. 115; [ch. 8](#), pp. 134 & 151; pt. 4, [ch. 8](#), pp. 38–39. Gillespie includes in “ceremonies” the Church appointing an annual day for the remembrance of the Incarnation (Christmas). Gillespie objects the strongest, in his words, to “sacred, significant [signifying] ceremonies,” having a mystical aspect to them, but he does not so explicate the principle at hand. This, no doubt, was because Sprint argued regarding ceremonies which were not necessarily sacred or signifying and most of his argumentation revolves around these factors. Inconvenience and scandalousness were determinative for Gillespie even if the action be not sacred or signifying.

⁴⁰ In [Reasons for which the Service Book urged upon Scotland ought to be Refused](#) ([Edinburgh: Anderson, 1638]), Gillespie includes as “ceremonies” things mostly deriving from the Anglican Service Book such as saints’ days, private baptisms and Lord’s Suppers, rites about funerals, the minister using a prescribed form to pray for and bless women after childbirth, the minister “standing, kneeling, turning to the people, and consequently from them, speaking with a loud voice, and consequently sometimes with a low voice,” people standing at the reading of the Gospels, responsive readings, “and many such-like, in number above 50...” On Gillespie as the author of this anonymous work, see [footnote 218](#) below.

⁴¹ The following authors (not exhaustive) use the term “ceremonies” with reference, at least in part, to divinely ordained ones in the New Testament (not limited to the sacraments), Bucer, Ursinus, Zepper, Palmer, Cawdrey, on the page ‘[On the Ordinances, Order & Policy of the Church](#)’ (RBO). Durham: “A third matter that occasions divisions is a diversity in worship, ceremonies, or things that relate to external administration of ordinances, when some follow one way in preaching, administering of sacraments, catechizing, etc. and others, another.” *Dying Man’s Testament*, pt. 4, [ch. 13](#), p. 368.

⁴² Gillespie made a [list](#) at the Westminster Assembly of eight “customs or rites in the worship of God, formerly received in any of the Kingdoms,” which included such things as singing the *Gloria Patri*, saying the Apostles’ Creed, standing up at the reading of the gospel, preaching on Christmas, responsive readings, etc. *Notes of Debates & Proceedings of the Assembly of Divines...* (Edinburgh: Ogle, 1846), p. 108.

⁴³ See ‘[No Rational Human Actions, of Authorities or Individuals, are Indifferent, but must be Good or Evil to Varying Degrees](#)’ at ‘[On Things Indifferent \(Adiaphora\)](#)’ (RBO).

and treat such rational actions as being indifferent when their convenience or inconvenience may be outweighed by other factors (such as in [Rom. 14](#)).⁴⁴

(3) Scandal can be quite a complex topic, as the same public action, or lack thereof, or different ones, may scandalize many people on different sides in different ways unto different degrees,⁴⁵ not to mention the many possible associations or connections the actions or things may have in various degrees with scandalous things, or not. Yet Gillespie always seems to take scandal in a one-dimensional view only, and in its fullest degree, i.e. with respect to “soul-murder” (cf. [Rom. 14:15, 20](#)); but this is to ignore the complexity of reality and Scripture.⁴⁶

Occasioning scandal may be justified when a person acts morally under a necessary or higher good,⁴⁷ such a scandal being passive, taken and received, but not active, given or culpable. Those who unduly receive passive or unjustified scandal, or take offense where it has not been given, or in Gillespie’s words, where there is “no cause,” are “faulty,” he rightly says, this being “sinful”.⁴⁸ As active, formal scandal always involves sin, and every Christian ought to agree one should never sin, the issue at hand is whether there is a sufficient necessity, cause or higher good

⁴⁴ This is obvious from the varying practices in [Rom. 14](#) itself: Meat and wine are materially neither good nor evil of themselves, yet abstaining from them for the sake of a weaker brother ([Rom. 14:21](#)) is surely inconvenient in some degree. Yet this inconvenience is outweighed by the value of the good of our brother’s soul and is undergone for such.

⁴⁵ John Tombes, *Christ’s Communion against Scandalizers...* (London: Forrest, 1641), [ch. 4](#), question 12, pp. 265–70.

⁴⁶ Rutherford tended to treat scandal in the same way in these debates: e.g. “Samuel Rutherford & Thomas Sydserff, Bishop of Galloway, ‘An Discussing of Some Arguments Against Canons & Ceremonies in God’s Worship’ 1636” in [Religious Controversy in Scotland, 1625–1639](#), ed. David G. Mullan in *Scottish History Society, Fifth Series*, vol 11 (Edinburgh: Scottish Historical Society, 1998), p. 84. In a different context, Baillie said: “Mr. Samuel [Rutherford] and Mr. George Gillespie were so scrupulous in the point of scandal, which to Mr. David Dickson, Mr. Robert Blair and me seemed most clear...” *Letters*, 2.76. Yet Tombes rightly noted: “the effect of the scandal [may] be not likely to be plain apostasy, or the like great sin, but some grievance of mind or discontent of the party scandalized...” *Christ’s Communion*, [ch. 4](#), p. 251.

On the complexity of scandal, see Durham, *Dying Man’s Testament*, pt. 1, [chs. 3, 4 & 6](#); Aberdeen Doctors, *Duplyes of the Ministers & Professors of Aberdeen to the Second Answers of some Reverend Brethren concerning the Late [National] Covenant [of 1638]...* (Edinburgh: Robert Young, 1638; repr. Aberdeen: John Forbes, 1663), “Of Scandal, and whether or not we may deny obedience to the laws of our superiors, for fear of scandal causelessly taken”, pp. 113–18 & “Whether the precept of obedience to superiors, or the precept of eschewing scandal, be more obligatory”, pp. 118–25; Baxter, *On Worship & Catholicity*, pp. 76–80 and Nicholas Byfield under the ‘Quotes’ section at ‘On Scandal & Offenses’ (RBO).

⁴⁷ See ‘Occasioning Passive Scandal may be Warranted & Justified by a Necessary or Higher Good’ at ‘On Scandal & Offenses’.

⁴⁸ See ‘On Passive Scandal & that Taking Offense where None is Given is Sinful’ and, on these distinctions, ‘Gillespie’s 12 Propositions on Scandal’ at ‘On Scandal & Offenses’ (RBO).

for righteously occasioning passive scandal. Given the complexity of scandal and it being highly circumstantial, different circumstances may tip the ethical scales in another, or opposite direction.

To give an example, take an action in Church governance or public worship, “not determinable by Scripture,” “with some good reason and warrant, given for the satisfaction of tender consciences,”⁴⁹ which is found useful and edifying by three hundred of the congregants, but erroneous, passive scandal is taken at it by one person. Should the minister forgo the good done to the many (which good forms and bears a degree of necessity)⁵⁰ due it occasioning one person unduly taking scandal?⁵¹

(4) It would seem scandal is not even essential to Gillespie’s principle, but only inconvenience is, as: (A) some of Gillespie’s arguments pertain only to inconvenience; and if no scandal was involved, he still apparently would not do the inconvenient actions; and (B) significant parallel passages in Gillespie show that personal inconvenience is enough for him to decline the commands of authorities.⁵²

(5) As some of Gillespie’s immediate arguments apply in principle equally to common human actions, the principle for Gillespie appears to extend far beyond

⁴⁹ These quoted phrases from Gillespie fulfill his conditions for such an action in worship: *Dispute*, pt. 3, ch. 7, §§5–7, pp. 112–15.

⁵⁰ See ‘What Constitutes Necessity?’ at ‘On Works of Necessity & Mercy on the Sabbath’ (RBO).

⁵¹ Jesus’s teaching in Mt. 18:5–11 about “one of these little ones” respects believing in Him, and being obstructed in this by the “world”; that is, a matter of salvation (hence the terrible consequences in vv. 6 & 8–9). That is far different than issues of necessary public policy amongst Christians, respecting scandals taken, not given.

Henry Jeanes (a London presbyterian): “I will but recite a limitation of Gregory de Valencia... Having laid down a rule, that for avoiding the scandal of our neighbor, which springs either from his ignorance or weakness, it behooves us, by the obligation of charity, to do or omit that which may be done, or left undone without sin, he afterwards puts this exception [in Latin]... And indeed (me thinks) he speaks reasonably. For improbable seems it that the sweet moderation which is in the yoke of divine laws should consist with so great a rigor, as in all matters whatsoever not simply unlawful, to exact not only a brotherly, but also a servile compliancy with every supposed weak one, whose weakness may be but pretended by those that are willing to speak favorably of them. For the humoring and contenting of every supposed weakling in all matters at which he takes offence, I conceive not myself bound to endanger my life to hazard my estate and fortunes, or to incur any other great or notable inconvenience...” *A Treatise concerning a Christian’s Careful Abstinence from All Appearance of Evil...* (Oxford: Turner, 1640), pp. 76–78.

The issue cuts the other way as well: In the era it was a real occurrence that where ministers did not wear a surplice, some Christians were so upset about the seeming breaking of decency, order and submission that they would walk out and not hear the Gospel from such ministers.

⁵² See ‘If Authorities may Rule only in Accord with God’s Moral Law, how then is this More Authority than being Privately Counseled with God’s Moral Law?’, ‘On Obedience or Resistance to Laws that are Inconvenient’ and ‘On Godly Subjection to Rulers’ at ‘How Far the Laws & Commands of Human Authorities Bind the Conscience’ (RBO).

public worship (as other parts of his book show),⁵³ and that not just for ministers but laymen also.⁵⁴ The consequences of this are profound, as will be expanded on.

(6) Gillespie does not distinguish between inconvenience and sin, but makes them one in the same.⁵⁵ Yet surely not all inconvenient, material actions (even in Church government and public worship) are sinful, as nature's light may tell you; but this will be demonstrated from Scripture also.

(7) Gillespie nowhere in his tome speaks of or argues the "greater good". He does address personal, "greater duties," but this allows him to confine the issues to immediate circumstances. Yet the relevance of a larger view of the greater good and its affecting our ethical obligations (especially with inconvenient actions, but also regarding scandal) cannot be denied.⁵⁶

(8) Finally, coercion does not factor into Gillespie's ethical scales: no obligation, even regarding something merely inconvenient, is for him altered by it. This is esteemed a supereminent virtue by some, of acting on (one) principle alone. To the contrary, William Vilant, a later indulgent Scottish minister, related:

"a godly and learned minister... heard a great zealot... say that whatever was unlawful for a man to do voluntarily was unlawful for him to do upon legal or physical constraint...

that hazard will not make a moral change in actions is a palpable error: If there were twenty with drawn swords waiting at the church door to kill a minister if he should come to preach, it were rash, furious, self-destroying, self-murdering zeal for a minister to venture to go to preach at that time in despite of the hazard, so

⁵³ Gillespie: "But I pray, does the Word underprop or approve the use of anything indifferent, if it be not used according to the foresaid rules and by consequence conveniently and profitably?" *Dispute*, pt. 4, ch. 3, p. 16.

⁵⁴ Gillespie's tome is addressed "To all and every one in the reformed churches of Scotland, England and Ireland, who love the Lord Jesus and mean to adhere unto the Reformation of Religion".

⁵⁵ Gillespie: "3. Forasmuch as the fear of God is to depart from evil, therefore such a one as does truly fear the name of God, insofar as he does fear the name of God and *quatenus* [so far], he is such a one, will never take well with the practice of inconvenient ceremonies, which is not a parting from, but a cleaving unto evil." *Dispute*, pt. 2, ch. 1, p. 7. Gillespie here glosses over the difference between miserable and moral evil, and assumes all practice of inconvenient ceremonies is to "take well" with them in an approving sense and is a voluntary "cleaving unto" them, rather than a permissive, tolerating reception of them as imposed burdens without moral approval.

⁵⁶ The greater good may justify and necessitate material cooperation with evil, without sin. See Fentiman, 'An Extended Introduction' at 'On the Ethics of Material Cooperation with, & Associations with Evil' (RBO).

certain, visible and unavoidable, and yet it were his duty at another time to preach where there were no such hazard."⁵⁷

Numerous Westminster divines agreed with Vilant on this principle.⁵⁸

Take this case: The Spanish Inquisition often made condemned protestants walk to the stake in costumes decorated with flames and grotesque devils.⁵⁹ If the martyrs refused to walk, they likely would have been beaten to death. Could a person, choosing to walk in that costume, righteously offer prayer and worship to God for his acceptance? Could they pray together or before the crowd? That

⁵⁷ William Vilant, *A Review & Examination of a Book bearing the title of The History of the Indulgence* (London: Cockerill, 1681), pp. 610–11. Vilant: "and another said, 'If men on constraint might pay cess [an objectionable tax], which they should not voluntarily do, without legal and physical constraint feared to follow, then the three children might have worshipped Nebuchadnezzar's image, because they were under constraint. And when it was answered that there were some actions in the substance of the fact sinful, that no constraint could make lawful, such as idolatry, and some which outward circumstances made lawful or unlawful: that distinction was denied; such is the ignorance of some of those teachers. Another made the paying of the cess like the offering of children to Moloch. It's a great pity that well-meaning people, who from a principle of conscience are willing rather to suffer than to sin, should be misguided by ignorant men and drawn into needless calamities to the ruin of their families and the reproach of religion..."

Those [field-presbyterian] prisoners being taken at [the *Battle of Bothwell Bridge* [1679] were pressed to bind themselves not to take up arms against the king's person and authority under the certification of no less punishment than death... Though they had not been subjects, but only prisoners of war in the victor's power, to deprive them of life or liberty forever, I suppose they could not have been blamed for the preservation of their life to have given in such a bond; some who were taken prisoners by [Oliver] Cromwell, for their liberty engaged not to carry arms against him; and I do not remember that any censured them for it...

For a merchant to cast his wares in the sea in a calm were wicked folly contrary to the 8th Command, a stealing from his family and himself; and yet in a storm, Paul and the passengers and mariners thought it their duty to cast out both goods and tackling of the ship [*Acts 27:18–19, 38*]." *Review & Examination*, pp. 610–11. For a further demonstration that coercion factors into ethical obligations, see Fentiman, 'An *Extended Introduction*' at 'On the Ethics of Material Cooperation with, & Associations with Evil' (RBO).

⁵⁸ Nine Westminster divines at the *Savoy Conference* (1661), Tuckney, Conant, Spurstowe, Wallis, Calamy, Sr., Case, Newcomen, Reynolds and Lightfoot, were part of the group of presbyterian and independent ministers which wrote: "An inconvenient mode of worship is a sin in the imposer, and in the chooser and voluntary user, that might offer God better, and will not, *Mal. 1:13–14*. And yet it may not be only lawful, but a duty to him that by violence is necessitated to offer up that or none. And yet we suppose the imposers should see cause to make an alteration." *The Grand Debate between the most reverend Bishops & the Presbyterian Divines appointed by his Sacred Majesty as Commissioners for the Review & Alteration of the Book of Common Prayer* (London: 1661), "*Papers*," p. 44. For the list of divines at Savoy: ed. Charles Shields, *The Book of Common Prayer, as Amended by the Westminster Divines, A.D. 1661* (Philadelphia: Claxton, 1867), *before the table of contents*. See also material conformity to a prevalent and unrivaled usurped power, albeit inconvenient and in some respects scandalous, at 'On the Ethics of being under Usurped Powers' (RBO).

⁵⁹ Cloe Cavero de Carondelet & Yonatan Glazer-Eytanm, "*Infamy within Sight: Making & Unmaking Sambenitos in the Early Modern Iberian World*" in *Renaissance Quarterly*, vol. 77, issue 2 (2024), pp. 389–441.

would be an inconvenient and scandalous ceremony of public worship done before God. Or ought they not to worship and pray to God before their death because they have scandalous material on their bodies? "The Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart." (1 Sam. 16:7)

You may say: They were forced under a death sentence, which is not comparable to most situations.⁶⁰ Yet there are many, as ministers in the early-1600's,⁶¹ who, under penalty of deposition from the ministry, with Paul, count preaching the saving Gospel and the eternal fruit that comes of it to be of greater weight than their lives. (Acts 20:24; 1 Cor. 9:15)

Do you suppose Jesus, the Captain of our salvation (Heb. 2:10), may have been praying when the soldiers put a fool's robe on Him and abused Him (Mt. 27:27-31)?⁶² What about when Jesus voluntarily bore his cross (Jn. 19:17; Ps. 40:7-8), was stripped (Mt. 27:35) thereon and made a public scandal to all? He publicly recited Scripture (Mt. 27:46) and prayed to the Father (Lk. 23:34 & 46), and "was heard" (Heb. 5:7). Friend, that was counted "obedience" to God (Heb. 5:8); let not the disciple count himself above his Master (Lk. 10:24-25). If Gillespie's assumption were true, that coercion (or the threat thereof) does not factor into ethical obligations, God saying, "I will have mercy and not sacrifice" (Hos. 6:6; Mt. 12:7) would be false.

The context having been set, we turn to God's Word. A view that cannot account for all the data of Scripture and reality is manifestly insufficient.

⁶⁰ In writing this, my baby's leaky diaper soaked part of my pants with urine. Not having time or circumstances to change, I went to our Lord's Day evening service, though it could be smelled by persons next to me. Yet, even with this inconvenient and scandalous material addition entering in some way into my acts of worship to God, I had no qualms. Ps. 38:5 & 15 "My wounds stink and are corrupt because of my foolishness... For in thee, O Lord, do I hope: thou wilt hear, O Lord my God." Ps. 88:1, 8-9, "O lord God of my salvation, I have cried day and night before Thee... Thou hast put away mine acquaintance far from me; Thou hast made me an abomination unto them... Lord, I have called daily upon thee, I have stretched out my hands unto Thee." Jon. 2:1 & 5, "Then Jonah prayed unto the Lord his God out of the fish's belly... the weeds were wrapped about my head." Acts 16:23-25, "they had laid many stripes upon them, they cast them into prison... and made their feet fast in the stocks. And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God..."

⁶¹ Sprint: "it were better for a minister to loose his life, than to loose the comfort of his ministry, Acts 20:24; 1 Cor. 9:15." *Cassander Anglicanus*, p. 32.

⁶² See footnote 177 below.

Scripture:

Principled Partial Conformity to Inconvenient & Scandalous Ceremonies may be Justified in Some Circumstances

Acts:

Burdensome Ceremonies

To say that Gillespie's principle is false, or doesn't follow, is to say there are cases where inconvenient and in-part scandalous ceremonies may and ought to be ethically done, as Scripture evidences. Paul, the apostles, elders and early Christians kept Old Testament rites at times, after the formal necessity of keeping them ceased after Christ's crucifixion, in abstaining "from things strangled, and from blood" ([Acts 15:20](#)),⁶³ performing and receiving circumcision ([Acts 16:3](#)), shaving one's head with a vow ([Acts 18:18](#)) keeping the Passover ([Acts 18:21](#)) and days of purification with giving animal sacrifices ([Acts 21:26-27](#)) and in participating in the Jewish Sabbath on the seventh day ([Acts 13:14-49](#); [15:21](#); [16:13-14](#); [17:1-4](#), [10-13](#), [17](#); [18:4](#)). Note that by their lawful occasional conformity to certain Temple ceremonies, early Christians showed that the Jewish establishment and people were still part of the external, visible people and Church of God during that time.⁶⁴ New Testament Christians occasionally conformed to such inconvenient ceremonies even in that broken and declining state of that visible Church.

Gillespie says these Old Testament ceremonies were "indifferent,"⁶⁵ in that God allowed Christians to do them, or not, during the time the Temple still stood. Yet these rites, as Sprint showed⁶⁶ and Gillespie silently passed over, were in their own nature carnal ([Col. 2:20](#); [Heb. 7:16](#); [9:10](#)), less perfect, weak, immature, inconvenient, hindering,

⁶³ That abstinence from blood ([Gen. 9:4](#)) was ceremonial (despite it being from before Moses), and otherwise indifferent in itself, but not moral, as most of the reformed believed in the Post-Reformation, see 'On Eating & Drinking Blood' (RBO).

⁶⁴ Rutherford: "Paul would not separate from the Church of the Jews, though they rejected Christ, till they openly blasphemed ([Acts 13:44-46](#); [18:5-6](#))." *Due Right*, pt. 2, ch. 4, p. 255.

⁶⁵ Gillespie, *Dispute*, pt. 2, ch. 1, p. 3.

⁶⁶ Sprint, *Cassander Anglicanus*, pp. 4-8.

burdensome, faulty, ineffective and a bondage and yoke contrary to the people (Num. 4:19; Acts 15:10, 28; Gal. 3:19, 23; 4:1–3, 9, 24, 30–31; 5:1, 7; Col. 2:14; Heb. 8:7–8; 9:9–11; 10:1, 11). They were for servants, not sons (Gal. 4:5–7); they were (after Christ’s death) needless, unprofitable shadows, being obstructive of Him and spiritual realities (Gal. 3:24–25; 4:9; Col. 2:17; Heb. 7:27; 13:9), and were deficient from Gospel liberty (Rom. 14:2, 14, 20), even being things that “turn from the truth” (Tit. 1:14), which God did not take pleasure in (Heb. 8:10); and they were such that perish with the using (Col. 2:22), even being called “the commandments and doctrines of men” (Col. 2:22). Not all the rites were dependent on the Temple, but some could have been and may be necessary after the Temple’s destruction (Acts 15:20–21).⁶⁷ Paul and the Christians performed these rites, which were of lesser authority and privilege, when a better way of worship was known and available (Heb. 13:10). The moderate puritans Nicholas Byfield and John Ball, besides our authors below, with Sprint, argued along these and the following lines.⁶⁸

In Acts 16:3, about Paul using his liberty to circumcise Timothy due to the onlooking Jews, the necessity for this material action (albeit understood religiously and falsely by others, as Paul knew it would so be misunderstood beforehand) was for the sake of not unduly scandalizing others, even unbelievers, for the greater well-being of the Church, avoiding its disturbance and for the flourishing of the Gospel. Note that Gal. 5:1 calls circumcision “a yoke of bondage” when it is imposed out of religious necessity, and yet Paul was willing to occasionally submit to it for the higher good when he would not submit to it out of formal principle or always (Gal. 2:5).

These ceremonies that Paul used had been superstitiously abused by false Christian teachers, had been laid on Christians as necessary, even for salvation (Acts 15:1, 5), persons seeking to bring Christians into bondage by them (Gal. 2:4); there had been much contention over them and scandal (Acts 15:2; Gal. 2:12–13); and Paul using them would certainly bring questions into some men’s minds who did not understand Paul’s actions (such as new believers who read the Bible today), as, whether having begun in the Spirit,

⁶⁷ Abstaining from things strangled and blood was not dependent on the Temple, but due to the necessity of not giving scandal to the neighboring Jews and weak Christians, which things may and could have lasted beyond the time of the Temple (Acts 15:21, especially as such persons remain today).

⁶⁸ Byfield, *A Commentary upon the Three First Chapters of the First Epistle General of St. Peter...* (d. 1622; London: Flesher [1637]), on 1 Pet. 2:13, pp. 434–37; Ball, *The Power of Godliness, both Doctrinally & Practically Handled...* (London: Miller, 1657), bk. 1, ch. 2, pp. 14–18.

we are made perfect by the flesh (Gal. 3:3), or whether in observing some Mosaic rites it lays us under the whole Law (Gal. 3:10–12, as Messianic Jews reason).

Not just Paul, but the apostles and elders at the synod in Jerusalem, bindingly (Acts 15:28; 16:4) laid some of these beggarly, burdensome ceremonies on the whole regional Church (Acts 15:23, 41; 16:4), as “it seemed good to the Holy Ghost” (Acts 15:28), yet not for the formal reason of service to that law of bondage. Rather, the circumstances made it necessary (Acts 15:28), to prevent the greater scandal of erring (Jewish) unbelievers and weak Christians (who expected the observance of such carnal and false, material ordinances), and for the spread of the Gospel amongst them. In the case of Paul, he had his reasons for keeping the ceremonies in each instance, though they are not always told to us or onlookers. But each time his necessity (Acts 16:1–5; 18:21) was less than ministerial deprivation. Sometimes it was simply to prevent unnecessary conflict.

How could all this be done? Though the Old Testament rites after Christ’s death were called “the commandments and doctrines of men” (Col. 2:22), just as the sort that Jesus condemns in Mt. 15:2–9, yet Paul and the Christians did not put any opinion of holiness in these rites or opinion of necessity beyond their nature or what derived from the circumstances (though others did). Paul and the Christians used these material, inconvenient and scandalous (in some way) ceremonies in accord with nature’s light, Christian prudence and the Word’s general rules⁶⁹ for the greater good: “Unto the pure all things are pure” (Tit. 1:15). All this was but a light sacrifice for Paul who was willing to go much further, and did: “unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law” (1 Cor. 9:20). He also did it to seek to avoid persecution, tumult and imprisonment (Acts 21:22–33). Or it can be done for the peace of the Church (Acts 15:19–21; 16:1–5), even in light of the presence of ignorant civil and religious authorities (such as the Jewish authorities in Jerusalem, so as not to scandalize them, even for the long-term).⁷⁰

⁶⁹ See the section below, “The General Rules of the Word” for how these principles from Westminster Confession of Faith (WCF) 1.6 are being used.

⁷⁰ Gillespie and Rutherford (amongst others) argued at length for not scandalizing the wicked, per Mt. 17:24–27: ‘We Ought to Refrain from Unnecessarily Scandalizing the Malicious & Giving Them Occasion to Become Worse’ at ‘On Scandal & Offenses’ (RBO). Byfield: “Thirdly, that the offence of aliens is to be regarded, that is, we must not do anything by which men that are not yet converted may be hardened from the liking of religion: and so offence must not be given either to the Jew or to the Grecian, 1 Cor. 10:31.” *Commentary, on 1 Pet. 2:13*, p. 436.

Onlooking Christians receiving passive scandal thereby, as undoubtedly some did, so far from suspecting, despising, judging and setting at nought ([Rom. 14:3–4, 10](#)) the Christian ministers, ought to realize that such material things and actions may be needful for ministers to do for the sake of the message of spiritual salvation. Ministers ought to teach the people the spiritual truth about these inconvenient, material ceremonies (as the early Christian officers did: [Acts 15:11, 17, 32, 35](#)) so that the ceremonies be less of a burden and the people may keep and tolerate them ([Acts 15:20, 23, 28–29; 16:4](#)) for the right reasons until they can be put aside when the necessity is alleviated, as Beza advised ministers in order to avoid the greater harm of ministerial deposition.⁷¹

Gillespie notes correctly, the expired Old Testament rites “had their original from God’s own institution.”⁷² Yet nonetheless the performance of the ceremonies by the apostolic Christians did not bind as divine ordinances, but only from reasons of common and perpetual equity (as has been seen). That these ceremonies were in their nature inconvenient and sometimes scandalous in their use did not upon that reason alone, *ipso facto*, make them illicit. Thus if material actions not expressly prescribed by God might be done in Church government or in a public worship service “with some good reason and warrant,” though the actions be inconvenient and scandalous in some way, that of itself need not make the actions unlawful. This is verified and taught in [Rom. 14](#), which obliges Christians to conform to inconvenient and scandalous ceremonies, not divinely ordained (nor ever had been), in some circumstances for reasons of common and perpetual equity.

⁷¹ Sprint: “Beza in a case of [the threat of ministerial] deprivation advises to conform; yet before they conform he thus counsels them: That both the pastor and the flock sin not against their conscience (presupposing the purity of doctrine to be left entire): We persuade the pastors that after they have freed their conscience, both before the King’s Majesty and the bishops, by a modest (as it becomes Christians to be free from all tumult and sedition) and yet weighty protestation (according as the greatness of the case requires): they then do openly press unto their flocks those things which do tend to take away the offence arising from conformity, and do withal discreetly and peaceably give diligent endeavor for the amendment of these abuses, as the Lord shall offer occasion (and so to conform); Epistle 12, fol. 99.” *Cassander Anglicanus*, “Reformed Practices,” “[Practice](#),” p. 196.

Regarding the greater harm of ministerial deposition, Burges, a partial-conformist, wrote: “I told some of my parishoners that I must wear the surplice, or loose my place, and they, me, requiring to know of them how they would accept my ministry if I wore it (for my judgment [that it was tolerable] they knew). They answered that they should never profit by it. Here upon I resolved not to stumble them, admonished them of their error, told them they would repent it ere the year went about; And indeed so did they with many tears, wishing that I had rather worn ten surplices than to have left them.” *Answer Rejoined*, p. 16.

⁷² Gillespie, *Dispute*, pt. 2, [ch. 1](#), p. 3.

Romans 14 & 1 Corinthians 8: Foods & Days

Gillespie and others who argue along his trajectory interpret the observance of days and only eating vegetables in [Rom. 14:2, 5](#) as referring only to the divinely ordained Old Testament rites,⁷³ and not other religious, Christian practices. This interpretation has some plausibility so far as (1) the canonical Old Testament context looms in the background, (2) Paul makes many references to Jewish thought in Romans, (3) and there was a Jewish community in Rome; hence (4) most commentators think Paul was speaking in part to Jewish Christians in Romans. It is then held that, while [Rom. 14](#) is relevant to and may be applied to bearing with Christians' varied use of indifferent things (like food and wine, [v. 21](#)), yet no erroneous worship practice after the destruction of the Temple is indifferent. Hence, the most obvious and major Biblical passage regarding bearing with and even conforming to certain erroneous, religious, Christian practices vanishes, and for some, that principle disappears from Christian ethics altogether.

However there are at least ten reasons [Rom. 14](#)'s religious observances cannot be limited to divinely ordained Old Testament rites. Given the importance of establishing this point, assure yourself of the teaching of God's Word:

1. If Old Testament rites were being practiced by some, they did not bind by divine authority but were being practiced by human opinion.
2. Paul nowhere explicitly names or limits the "weak in the faith" ([Rom. 14:1](#)) to Jews, nor the observances to Old Testament rites.
3. Paul includes in the offensive practices drinking wine ([Rom. 14:21](#)), which Jews generally did not have a problem with; the restriction of it is rare in the Old Testament and heavily qualified.⁷⁴
4. Paul does not limit the application of the principles he lays down to only the observance of days or "meat and drink" ([Rom. 14:17](#)), but to "*any thing* whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak." ([Rom. 14:21](#)) The principle

⁷³ Gillespie, *Dispute*, pt. 1, [ch. 8](#), p. 25; pt. 2, [ch. 1](#), p. 3.

⁷⁴ Wine is only explicitly restricted to laymen in Old Testament ceremonies for those taking Nazarite vows ([Num. 6:1-4](#)). Of the seven Old Testament feasts, the only one where wine might have been abstained from was the Day of Atonement, where the people were to "afflict" their souls ([Lev. 23:27-32](#)). Yet even here wine is not explicitly prohibited.

determining what things are to be accommodated stems not from them being divinely ordained, but from what weak Christian brothers take offense at, which could be “any thing”.

5. No divine ordinance restricted Jews to eating only “vegetables” ([Rom. 14:2](#)). The Mosaic prohibition was only of certain unclean meats, not all meat, and if Jews were worried about their food being defiled by unclean gentiles, that would apply to vegetables and all drinks as well. Jewish Christians could have easily enough not eaten meat with the blood in it ([Gen. 9:4](#)). If they were worried the animal had died due to strangling ([Gen. 15:20](#)), their abstaining from all meat due to such was not an ordinance of the Lord. Daniel’s example of only consuming vegetables and water ([Dan. 1:5-16](#)) was miraculous and may have been due to the principle of abstaining from luxurious food⁷⁵ rather than respecting meat *per se*.

6. Persons not eating meat in [Rom. 14](#) may more likely have been about avoiding meats that had been previously offered to pagan idols, especially as Paul speaks of such abstaining Christians as “weak” five times in [1 Cor. 8:7-12](#), and as [1 Cor. 8](#) includes other similar language and reasons as are in [Rom. 14](#). These weak Christians may have been not only Jewish but gentile, and the practice was not divinely ordained.

7. Abstaining from meat and wine pertained to fasting, whether generally in long-term ascetic practices or only for certain days, whether Jewish or pagan. None of this was divinely ordained. Converts may have continued some of their religious fasting practices, but now kept such to the Lord as Christians with an opinion of some necessity or even sanctity.

8. Pagan practices in Rome included many various celebrations of certain days where societal, civil and pagan associations intermixed. Christian converts may have thought it necessary to continue keeping such days, now unto the Lord, with some opinion of sanctity or not.

9. As the foregoing circumstances pertained at Rome and persons were becoming Christians, both Jew and gentile, it is most natural that Paul’s general categories in [Rom. 14](#) were meant to apply to all these varied persons and practices, and thus also

⁷⁵ So the Hebrew. See Strong’s #6598 and [various Bible translations on Dan. 1:5](#).

to the Christian Church at large (as evidenced in [1 Cor. 8](#)) throughout her history, rather than being only directly relevant to the divinely ordained Jewish ceremonies while the Temple stood.

10. That pillar of high, Reformed Orthodoxy, Francis Turretin, for good reason, did not limit the observance of [Rom. 14](#) to the divinely ordained Jewish practices.⁷⁶ Thomas Cartwright held that a minister wearing a white gown (a surplice) in a worship service (which will be commented on more below) fell under the categories of [Rom. 14](#).⁷⁷ Modern commentators document the diverse, relevant historical/religious background referred to above⁷⁸ and categorize the many commentators that take views besides that the observances were purely divinely ordained.⁷⁹

Considering [Rom. 14](#) cannot be limited to practices of divine authority, note also the observances were erroneous, inconvenient, restricted Christian liberty and were in some regard scandalous: Surely not eating meat and wine in the presence of weak Christians, while the world stands ([1 Cor. 8:13](#)), impinges upon one's Christian liberty, is inconvenient and takes the exercise of self-denial in not doing that which is more convenient. The rites of the weak, being erroneous ([Rom. 14:14, 16, 20](#)), therefore by their nature and the weak's example tended to cause others to err, which fits into the very definition of scandal, according to Gillespie and the reformed.⁸⁰ Gillespie cannot deny this because he held, rightly, that all rational actions, such as these erroneous practices of the weak, cannot be purely indifferent, but are either good or bad to some degree.⁸¹

Further, it is clear the weak's practices were "ceremonies," as: (1) these positive, religious practices were (2) public, (3) evidently occurred in the Christian assemblies and (4) they expressed a form of devotion, or worship, immediately unto the Lord ([Rom. 14:6–](#)

⁷⁶ Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, 3 vols., tr. George M. Giger, ed. James Dennison Jr. (1679–1685; P&R, 1994), 2:90.

⁷⁷ Thomas Cartwright, *The Rest of the Second Reply...* ([Basel: Guarinus] 1577), pt. 2, [ch. 8](#), p. 243.

⁷⁸ Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Romans: a New Translation with Introduction & Commentary* in *The Anchor Bible* (Doubleday: 1993), [pp. 687–88](#); Robert Jewett, *Romans in Hermenia* (Fortress Press, 2007), [pp. 844–45](#).

⁷⁹ Douglas Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Eerdmans, 1996), on [Rom. 14:1–15:13](#), G. "A Plea for Unity".

⁸⁰ See 'Definitions' and 'That an Ill Example or Unspoken Pressure may be an Urging & Binding of Others' Consciences unto that Ill' at 'On Scandal & Offenses' (RBO).

⁸¹ See 'No Rational Human Actions, of Authorities or Individuals, are Indifferent, but must be Good or Evil to Varying Degrees' at 'On Things Indifferent (Adiaphora)' (RBO).

9). (5) Gisbert Voet, in a celebrated work of the Reformed Orthodox, answered that negative religious practices, such as abstaining from certain foods, may be ceremonies⁸² (cf. 1 Tim. 4:1–5), and (6) Gillespie called Church “festival days” (Christmas, Easter, etc.) practiced in his day “ceremonies”.⁸³

Nor were Rom. 14’s ceremonies wholly lawful and good (such as with simple days of fasting and thanksgiving kept to the Lord), as: (1) the Christians keeping them are called “weak,” (2) the chosen days were esteemed above other days (Rom. 14:5), (3) the food abstained from was considered “unclean” (Rom. 14:14) and (4) there was a certain opinion of necessity about all this (else why did the weak feel constrained to keep such a regimen and were tempted to judge others about it? Rom. 14:16). Paul notably does not specify what religious opinions were attached to these various keepings of days, no doubt so as to include a wide spectrum of the weak’s erroneous religious opinions, some being worse than others. It is clear the weak put a false religious value, or holiness, likely of various kinds and degrees, into their ceremonies.

Yet in light of all this, the weak’s persons were to be considered above their practices (Rom. 14:1, 3–4, 9–10, 13, 15, 18, 20–21), God accepted their persons (Rom. 14:3–4, 8, 15, 18) and the good devotion in their erroneous ceremonial worship as service unto Him (Rom. 14:4, 8, 18), God upholds them (Rom. 14:4), they ought to be fully persuaded in their own mind of what they do (Rom. 14:5) and you ought not to judge them or set them at nought (Rom. 14:3–4, 10, 13). Further, given this, as people commonly approve the weak in their devotional practices as pious (Rom. 14:18),⁸⁴ you ought to follow “the things which make for peace” (Rom. 14:19) and not let your good be evil spoken of (Rom. 14:16); nor ought you to grieve your brother, cause him to stumble, or destroy the work of God (Rom. 14:13, 15, 20–21). Paul directs you ought to charitably conform to these not-divinely-ordained, inconvenient and in-part scandalous ceremonies (Rom. 14:15, 21), for the kingdom of God is not in such external observances, but in “righteousness, and peace,

⁸² Gisbert Voet: “8th Problem: Whether indeed any ceremony is able to be constituted in privation, omission or abstinence? I respond: It is affirmed, so it is in the Greek Church in their abstinence from fermented bread and abstinence from unclean foods [cf. Rom. 14:14] and things.” *Ecclesiastical Politics* (Amsterdam: Waesberg, 1663), vol. 1, pt 1, bk. 2, ‘Of Ecclesiastical Things, or Acts & Exercises’, Tract 1, ‘Of Formularies, or Liturgies & Rituals’, ch. 7. ‘Questions Further Explained on the Nature, Causes & Properties of the Ceremonies’, p. 425.

⁸³ Gillespie, *Dispute*, pt. 1, chs. 7 & 9; pt. 3, ch. 1.

⁸⁴ Even if Rom. 14:18 is speaking of the stronger brothers, per what immediately precedes in vv. 16–17, yet the weak may be assumed, at least some of them, to have practiced “righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost,” (v. 17) and hence v. 18 still encompasses them.

and joy in the Holy Ghost” (Rom. 14:17), and so outward, material conforming in such a context is “good” (Rom. 14:21).

It is true there is a difference between abstaining from a practice and positively performing one, but the two are often indivisibly bound up together, as in Rom. 14: For one to abstain from eating meat requires one to positively, materially perform and conform to what one otherwise would not do, namely to gather up and eat vegetables and only drink things besides wine instead. When Paul enjoins a necessity of conformity on stronger Christians in Rom. 14 regarding food and drink, it is to positively, materially perform the inconvenient and in-part scandalous ceremony, yet without the erroneous religious opinion or thinking that the practice is necessary in itself (Rom. 14:14, 20, 22).

All this shows Gillespie’s principle and arguments that it is unlawful, and that always so, to perform an inconvenient and scandalous ceremony, are false. It is true Rom. 14 only directly speaks to the context of weak, new Christians being received into the Church (Rom. 14:1), however: (1) Gillespie himself rightly affirms that a Christian may remain weak indefinitely and perpetually, and other factors are to give way to this,⁸⁵ (2) weak Christians are often mixed into the situations that will be further discussed in this Intro and by our authors below, and (3) see p. 84 below for how the same principles, from other Scriptures, may apply to Christians that are not weak, but hard-hearted. If inconvenience and scandal do not of themselves make ceremonies illicit, even non-divinely-ordained ones of human construction, then conditional conformity to such in other situations may be justified, right and obligatory given sufficient reasons, which reasons may be equal or greater in weight or kind than those regarding weak believers.

⁸⁵ See Gillespie’s quote at ‘A Minimal Reason is Not a Sufficient Ground to a Yet Objecting Conscience’ at ‘The Mere Will, Determination, Judgment or Saying So of Authorities is an Insufficient Ground of Faith & Obedience, & Authorities are Not to Act or Require Something without Sufficient Natural, Moral or Spiritual Reasons, Manifest to Consciences’ (RBO). George Gifford: “This is your great ignorance... which imagine that so soon as a truth is showed in any matter, the party that errs is by and by convinced in his conscience. There were thousands in the Church of Jerusalem, Acts 21, which erred grossly about the retaining the ceremonial law, and the holy apostles were driven to bear with them when they could not persuade them from it, and that many years. And who can convince errors like the blessed apostles?” A Short Reply unto the Last Printed Books of Henry Barrow & John Greenwood... (London: Orwin, 1591), pp. 9–10.

Joshua 22: The Altar of Ed

In the days of Joshua when the land of Canaan had been substantially conquered and the two and a half tribes which were to dwell on the eastern side of Jordan went back to their allotted homeland, to the great surprise and consternation of the other tribes, they erected an “altar of imposing size” ([Josh. 22:10](#) ESV) which came to be called the Altar of Ed (or “of Witness,” [Josh. 22:10–34](#)). This prominent, newly instituted, scandalous, public, positive and arbitrary (in the sense of human-chosen) religious sign, in imitation of a part of divinely instituted worship (called by the same name of “altar”) was inconvenient in its construction, not to mention function for most of the tribes of Israel, yet it was not held to have inherent sanctity or be meritorious, nor to function the same as the divinely instituted altar.

The Altar of Ed, erected by a minority of the people, had a civil grounding based only on a potential harm and a divine promise (that the two and a half tribes should have access to the divinely instituted altar in the future if this became contested, [Josh. 22:27](#)) and was a human-made sign and seal (or one might say a human sacrament) thereof. This human ordinance was an adjunct, even a visible manifestation of a part of worship, as it signified an oath between the tribes before God ([Josh. 22:34](#)); and it was to endure as long as the divine service of worship and promise did. This human, ordained, religious ceremony (even after God had said, “Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you,” [Dt. 4:2](#); [12:32](#), it being subordinate to that Word, not formally coordinate with it,⁸⁶ however it materially appeared, and that to the ten tribes initially) was at least tolerated while its grounds lasted with public consent and in consideration of the testimony and sincerity of its observers, while the removal of it would have incurred worse consequences than its toleration. Reformed commentators on the passage in Reformed theology’s classical era generally held that this toleration was the right decision and that the Altar of Ed was not sinful in and of itself.⁸⁷

⁸⁶ On this notion see the section below ‘[Deuteronomy 4:2: Do Not Add or Diminish](#)’.

⁸⁷ You may peruse them yourself at ‘[Commentaries on Joshua](#)’, ‘[Older, Whole, Old Testament Commentaries](#)’ and ‘[Whole Bible Commentaries](#)’ at (RBO).

1 Samuel 8–12: Samuel's Crowning of Saul

Samuel righteously performed an incredibly significant and prominent, inconvenient and scandalous religious ceremony, even publicly facilitating and leading the people of God in it. Israel had previously been governed directly by God their King, but they desired a humanly glorious king as the nations around them had. “The thing displeased Samuel” (1 Sam. 8:6), and though God said “they have rejected Me,” (v. 7) He directed Samuel to do as God’s people sinfully desired, with the proviso that he “protest solemnly unto them” (v. 9), which Samuel did before, during and after his action.

The prophetic anointing and enthroning of Israel’s first king at the Lord’s immediate appointment (1 Sam. 9:16–10:1, 6, 10, 24; 11:6, 15) was not simply a civil act like in the choice of any other civil officer of any other nation. Rather, the choice, calling and character of that kingship stemmed from above nature’s light, was religiously unique to Israel’s Theocracy and was truly holy (1 Sam. 10:24; 24:6). Saul’s anointing (1 Sam. 10:1) and enthronement (1 Sam. 11:15), therefore, entailed a special worship. Yet Saul’s enthronement fell far short of the glory of God and therefore was sinful (Rom. 3:23), exceedingly so. (1 Sam. 8:7, 19–20; 12:17–20) Yet Samuel’s righteousness remained unblemished through publicly, materially facilitating, leading and performing that religious, inconvenient and scandalous ceremony of government and worship in Saul’s coronation, fulfilling the people’s sinful will. Samuel countenanced and upheld his conceded action’s effects for the forty years of Saul’s reign. (Acts 13:21)

Samuel, from his first protest upon the people’s initial voicing of their desire (1 Sam. 8:10–18), was silent as to the sinfulness of the course he was facilitating and prospering until it had been completed. (1 Sam. 11:15) After the coronation, Samuel speaks to Israel with tremendous moderation, kindness and grace (1 Sam. 12:1–15, 20–25) while matter-of-factly reporting “all this wickedness” they have done. (1 Sam. 12:16–20)

Why did the Lord direct Samuel as He did in this matter? Besides the Lord’s own reasons, there may be an appropriate and compelling force by natural law and light for governors to permissively give way to an obstinate, carnal people’s will,⁸⁸ as the welfare

⁸⁸ Rehoboam wrongly did not concede to the demands of the majority of his people. (1 Kn. 12:1–24) The Lord toleratingly upheld the majority, though they were greatly wrong in dividing. (1 Kn. 12:22–24)

and value of the people, especially as God's inheritance, may outweigh their sinful, yet tolerable demands, even against God's ordained governance. It was precisely because God, by his grace, calling and Covenant, valued his unworthy people more than their sinful perfidies, that He proceeded so: "For the Lord will not forsake his people for his great name's sake: because it hath pleased the Lord to make you his people." (v. 22)

If God so establishes this priority, ought not his ministers to act likewise when necessary for these same reasons of common and perpetual equity? Samuel, so far from separating from God's people and leading a schism, besides warning them, graciously encouraged them and said that he would pray for them and teach them "the good and right way," being willing, if they "still do wickedly," to go down in the boat with them. (v. 25)

Matthew 12:1-12

The Sabbath, Jesus & David

To omit or wholly break a positive divine ordinance may be something greater than to partially break a positive divine ordinance (or to do it in some way impurely) or to do something inconvenient and scandalous (in some way) in addition to it. Let a few background and prefatory foundational principles be given and distinguish: (1) While God's moral law ought never to be transgressed (WLC 99.5), yet divine laws positively instituted⁸⁹ in addition to nature's law and light (not binding from nature *per se* or at all

William Bucanus: "Whether ought the magistrate to tolerate only the true religion in his dominions or diverse? Only the true religion... Yet notwithstanding, sometimes the days are such, that godly kings and magistrates, moved with the necessity of retaining the public peace and the avoiding of secret plots and seditions, are constrained like skillful pilots, as it were, to give way unto the tempest and to bear with them that are superstitious or go astray, that so they may rather have some religion and some commonwealth than none at all." *Institutions of Christian Religion* (London: Snowdon, 1606), 49th Common Place, p. 873;

⁸⁹ For the distinction see 'On Positive Laws & Ordinances, & the Law of Nations' (RBO), especially the section, 'On the Difference Between Natural & Positive Laws' and 'Natural vs. Instituted Worship' (RBO).

times), may be adapted,⁹⁰ foregone⁹¹ or broken under sufficient necessity of moral reasons, precisely in order to uphold moral law.⁹² (2) God's positive ordination of the time of the Sabbath⁹³ in the first week of Creation ([Gen. 2:1–4](#), enforced in the Fourth Commandment, [Ex. 20:8–11](#)) is the foundation of all the regular, weekly instituted worship that would be later ordained and appended thereon. ([Lev. 19:30; 23:3; Num. 28:9–10; Acts 15:21; 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:2](#))

As Thomas Aquinas and a father of English Sabbatarianism, the partial-conformist, Nicholas Bound,⁹⁴ observed: Elijah, at God's approval, fled from Jezebel and travelled for forty days through numerous Sabbaths ([1 Kn. 19:1–9](#)), as "the preservation of a man's own body, life, or health, when it is necessary, breaks not the Sabbath."⁹⁵ The reason for this, of course, is that "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath" ([Mk. 2:27](#)) and God has said, "For I desired mercy and not sacrifice." ([Hos. 6:6; Mt. 12:7](#)) The Sabbath was given after the creation of man, to bless him, not to impair him.⁹⁶ Yet if the whole Sabbath may and ought to be expended, when necessary, for the preservation of man's health, then so may all and every instituted Sabbath worship be expended, adapted or broken, if necessary, for that same end.

Hence Jesus taught that a sheep fallen into a pit, though it only cause it mental distress, ought to be pulled out on the Sabbath ([Mt. 12:11](#)), though this could have waited

⁹⁰ See 'On the Administration of the Sacraments in Extra-Ordinary Circumstances' (RBO), 'On Social Distancing & the Church's Adaptation in a Time of Spreading Disease' (RBO), 'On the Civil Magistrate's Just Authority for Restraining the Congregating of Citizens, even the Church, & Quarantining, etc., with Sufficient Natural Warrant, according to God's Moral Law' (RBO) and 'On Holding Public Worship & Church Courts by Distance Through Technology, & on Using Satellite Churches, under Necessity & for Edification' (RBO).

⁹¹ See 'That Persons or Whole Churches Omitting Parts of Worship (whether Personal, Family or Public) due to Necessary Factors (including Providential & for Reformation) may be Acceptable to God' (RBO) and 'On Cancelling Church Assemblies & Waiting, or Fleeing [in a Time of Spreading Disease]' at 'On Social Distancing...' (RBO), 'In a Time of Danger & Spreading Disease', 'On Holding & Attending Public Worship under a High Risk of Severe Persecution' and 'Works of Mercy & Necessity may take up the Whole Lord's Day if Need be' at 'On Works of Necessity & Mercy on the Sabbath' (RBO).

⁹² See 'Natural Law, in Necessity, Over-Rules Positive Law when They Conflict' at 'On Positive Laws...' (RBO).

⁹³ See 'That the Sabbath is Partly Moral & Partly Positive' at 'The Lord's Day' (RBO).

⁹⁴ Nicholas Bound (d. 1613), *The True Doctrine of the Sabbath...* (Reformation Heritage Books, 2015), pp. XXVII, XLIII–XLVI.

⁹⁵ Bound, *Doctrine of the Sabbath*, pp. 225–26, citing Thomas Aquinas, *Summa*, pt. 2 of 2, quest. 122, art. 4 [reply to objection 3].

⁹⁶ Bound: "the day of rest was appointed for the benefit of man; and not only of him, but of all other creatures. And therefore it must be so observed as may be most beneficial unto them; and the rest in it must give place to them, and not they to it. So that it were against the meaning of the Lawgiver to abuse the rest unto the hurt of them;" *Doctrine of the Sabbath*, p. 233.

till the next day. Jesus asks, “How much then is a man better than a sheep?” (Mt. 12:12) Take something lesser: “doth not each one of you on the Sabbath loose his ox or his ass from the stall, and lead him away to watering?” (Lk. 13:15) Clearly preserving life, doing good and having mercy admits of degrees, even to the smallest things,⁹⁷ as Jesus and his disciples made no qualms about plucking and rubbing grain to eat when they grew hungry (Mt. 12:1), though they could have suffered through it. It was the Pharisees, much practiced in self-denial and non-conformity, who added to God’s Law (all in the name of keeping it) and condemned Christ and his followers. Yet the Lord loves his people, even these, Christ’s ministers, more than positive ordinances (which He ordained for their good and edification, not their hurt,⁹⁸ Rom. 7:12; 2 Cor. 10:8; 13:10; Eph. 4:11–13).

Jesus, to clear his and his disciples’ scandalous breaking of the divinely ordained religious ceremony of the Sabbath at the call of God’s natural law, asks the Pharisees of his day if they had read the Bible, namely where David, “when he was hungry,” with the priest (or minister) consenting, ate the “hallowed bread,” “which was not lawful for him to eat.” (1 Sam. 21:6; Mt. 12:4) Seeing as David’s men who also ate were outwardly clean, this being a point in the matter (1 Sam. 21:4–6), they and the minister practiced justified, partial-conformity to God’s ordinances, fulfilling them as far as possible while giving way to the weightier things of God’s Law (which includes mercy, Mt. 23:23), though the actions were inconvenient to the priests and other worshippers (as they had no further show-bread) and scandalous to God’s visible people (as proved by the fallout, 1 Sam. 22:6–19).

Nor was all this at the immediate special inspiration of David (and therefore inapplicable to us); rather, David argued from nature’s light:⁹⁹ When the minister said, “There is no common bread under mine hand, but there is hallowed bread,” David appealed: “the bread is in a manner common.” (1 Sam. 21:5) Nor were the exceptions to

⁹⁷ See ‘What Constitutes Necessity?’ and ‘On Self-Care & Upkeep as a Legitimate Reason for Missing Public Worship & Church Activities’ at ‘On Works of Necessity & Mercy on the Sabbath’ (RBO).

⁹⁸ See ‘All Authority Given of God is Only unto Good, Truth & Edification, & None Unto Error & the Detriment of People’ at ‘On Passive Obedience’ (RBO).

⁹⁹ Rutherford: “This fact of David was not done by any extraordinary impulsion of the Spirit, but by a constant channel that providence ordinarily runs in, according to which I, or any professor [of Christianity] must be obliged to prefer a work of mercy to sacrifice, that is, by which we are to give obedience to the Sixth Command, which is not to kill; even as without extraordinary impulsion, I may absent myself from hearing the Word when I find going to Church may endanger my life, for non-obedience to affirmatives [affirmative commands] in a greater necessity is ordinary.” *Divine Right of Church-Government* (London: Field, 1646), Appendix, [quest. 6](#), p. 81.

the rule Jesus cited in [Mt. 12](#) so extraordinary that it is questionable whether we might ever have opportunity to perform them, especially with a clear conscience: One may and ought to do as He did, if necessary, every time any person or animal is hungry on the Sabbath, if it is in one's means.¹⁰⁰ Did not the priests of old, and now ministers, labor in divine service every week, "and are blameless?" ([Mt. 12:5](#))

Jesus's conclusion to his argument, "For the Son of man is Lord even of the Sabbath Day" ([Mt. 12:8](#)) suggests David, who had been previously anointed to be king, also ought to be viewed in his flight from Saul and from being harmed by the civil magistrate as advancing the cause of God's kingdom. Hence partial-conformity (and by consequence from the greater to the lesser, performing a divine ordinance materially adapted or along with other inconvenient and passively scandalous actions) might not only be justified by preventing harm to Christians and ministers (and hence churches) from imposed ecclesiastical or civil penalties, but also for the preserving and advancing of God's kingdom and the bearing of spiritual life through the Gospel (which bears a much greater importance and necessity in numerous ways than bodily health). While many non-conformists love sacrifice more than mercy ([1 Sam. 15:22](#); [Isa. 1:11-17](#); [Mt. 23:17-28](#)), yet God loves mercy more than sacrifice. ([Mic. 6:6-8](#))

The General Rules of the Word

Jesus's example that "on the sabbath days the priests in the temple profane the sabbath, and are blameless" ([Mt. 12:5](#)) evidences a divine, positive ordinance (the Sabbath) being substantially (not simply circumstantially) modified in its regulations in the public, regularly called worship assembly, and that every week, indefinitely, so far as

¹⁰⁰ Bownd: "...Even so here, the Spirit of God by 'sacrifice' (as by one kind), meaning generally the whole worship of God, He would have us to offer it unto Him, as that in the mean season we neglect no occasion of showing mercy unto any of his creatures, which He offered unto us; but rather first of all to show mercy, and then to offer sacrifice. As He says in another place, 'First be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift' ([Mt. 5:22](#)). For seeing that the whole service of God is ordained for this cause among many others, that we might be made more fit to help our brethren, and to show all duties of mercy unto them, all others must give place unto this, when necessity so requires. According to that which Master Gualter says: *Omnia externa*: 'All outward things must give place unto love, lest we lay a snare upon them' - *quos necssitas inevitabilis alio vocat* - 'whom inevitably necessity calls another way'..." *Doctrine of the Sabbath*, pp. 232-33.

the necessity required. The response that this necessity was explicitly ordained in Scripture (where God had commanded the priests to prepare animal sacrifices and Gospel ministers to labor in ministering the Word) does not do justice to Jesus's argument in [Mt. 12:1-13](#). Jesus's example of the priests' labor is conjoined with He and his disciples rubbing grain in the fields and David eating the show-bread, both out of hunger, which exception was not explicitly ordained in Scripture. All the examples contribute to and fall under Jesus's conclusion that a general rule of the Word, that God desires mercy more than sacrifice (not to mention nature's light and Christian prudence), may substantially modify or break positive, divinely instituted, regulated worship ordinances (as keeping the Sabbath is worship itself).¹⁰¹

Many non-conformists in England in the late-1500's and 1600's showed no awareness, as many today, for the most significant original reasons why select ceremonies were retained in the Anglican Church at her reformation. Those ceremonies (which they saw as not forbidden in themselves) had been present in the early Church before the rise of Romanism and were kept in part to make the service inoffensive as far as possible to both Romanists and protestants alike when Romanists made up a majority of the population, revolts occurred and were feared,¹⁰² and, out of mercy, to not scandalize them more than necessary (a principle Rutherford and others argued for at length)¹⁰³ and to gain their judgment and affections more easily unto the true Gospel and the protestant communion.¹⁰⁴ Nine Westminster divines spoke of this as the English reformers' "great wisdom".¹⁰⁵

Much of the controversy between the conformed and non-conformists in England became more pronounced when, with time, those original circumstances (and hence justifications) increasingly expired as the Romanist presence in England waned. In this

¹⁰¹ Rutherford: "time is a common adjunct of divine worship: but such a time, to wit, the Lord's Day, is both the time of worship and worship itself [in observing it]." *Divine Right*, "Introduction," pp. 3-4.

¹⁰² Christopher Haigh, "From Monopoly to Minority: Catholicism in Early Modern England" in *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, vol. 31 (1981), pp. 129-47; Scott Wenig, "The Reformation in the Diocese of Ely during the Episcopate of Richard Cox, 1559-77" in *Sixteenth Century Journal*, vol. 33, no. 1 (Spring, 2002), pp. 151-80.

¹⁰³ See footnote 69 above.

¹⁰⁴ See 'On the Original Reasons for the Anglican Ceremonies' at 'On Ceremonies' (RBO).

¹⁰⁵ As they were a part of the group of leading presbyterians and Independents at the [Savoy Conference](#) (1661): "...as our first reformers, out of their great wisdom, did at that time so compose the Liturgy as to win upon the Papists, and to draw them into their Church-communion, by varying as little as well they could from the Romish forms before in use..." *Grand Debate*, "Exceptions," p. 2. See footnote 103 above. For the names of those nine Westminster divines, see footnote 57.

context, our puritan authors, listing some of the Word's general rules pertaining to worship, say:

"...many that use sundry of these ceremonies do it because either they judge them things indifferent and such as whereunto the law of Christian charity and the tender regard to the weakness of the people does (as they think) bind them, following therein the direction of the Word [Mt. 18:6; Rom. 14:1-2, 13-15; 15:1-2; 1 Cor. 8:11-13; 9:19-22; 10:23-24, 32-33; Gal. 6:2; Phil. 2:3-4; 1 Thess. 5:14; 1 Pet. 3:8], or else they tolerate them as burdens [Mt. 23:4; Acts 15:28] which it lies not in them to remove, being laid upon them by the determination of the magistrate [Neh. 9:37; Prov. 24:21-22; Rom. 13:1-2; 1 Pet. 2:13-15] and custom of the Church [Acts 16:3; Heb. 13:17].

And seeing that they do in judgment and affection unfeignedly dislike [1 Sam. 8:6-7; 12:17-20; Mt. 23:3-4] that which, either through human infirmity (Rom. 7:15; 2 Chron. 20:33) or in Christian wisdom and to prevent more dangerous inconveniences (Gen. 47:13-27; Mt. 12:1-8; 17:24-27; Acts 16:3; 21:20-26; 1 Cor. 7:26-28), they are enforced to bear with ([Ex. 5:10-12] 1 Kn. 2:5; [1 Cor. 7:20-24])..."¹⁰⁶

Deuteronomy 4:2

Do Not Add or Diminish

Dt. 4:2, "Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that you may keep the commandments of the Lord your God that I command you," (cf. Dt. 12:32) is often interpreted to be speaking directly of worship ordinances. Yet the context shows it is not, nor does it directly refer to the Temple or Church government, but rather to all of God's commandments (moral, positive, judicial and ceremonial), namely which were being given in Deuteronomy (and in principle in the rest of the canon, Prov. 30:5-6). Certainly all those, including general rules of the Word, were prescribed.¹⁰⁷ That a divine positive ordinance be necessarily added to, diminished or altered in necessity, to that degree, by another more fundamental divine precept, according as is due, is not to add or diminish ought from God's Word or his commandments.

¹⁰⁶ pp. 246-47 below

¹⁰⁷ General rules of the Word, found in the Word, must be included in Dt. 4:2 which speaks of "the word," and they must be prescribed as Dt. 4:2 speaks of "the word which I command you".

Further, because the commands of Dt. 4:2 relate to all of life, they, on the face of it, do not preclude every other material addition to those commands or other humanly instituted civil or ecclesiastical ordinances, as seen in Scripture itself (Ex. 3:16; Judg. 11:39; Ruth 4:1–11; 1 Sam. 8:11–17; 10:25; 1 Kn. 12:6–8; 1 Chron. 24–26; 2 Chron. 19:5–11; Ezra 4:13; Neh. 8:4; Esth. 9:27–28; Jer. 32:11; Mt. 9:9; Jn. 18:39; Rom. 13:6–7; Acts 25:11–12, 21; 1 Pet. 2:13). What Dt. 4:2 does prohibit, is anything being put on par, or coordinate with God’s Word and commands, or not subordinate thereto.¹⁰⁸

Worship, given its nature in approaching unto our singular God, as seen in the rest of Scripture, is herein by this principle more closely “limited,” or regulated.¹⁰⁹ More flexibility is granted in Scripture to Church government; greater liberty is allowed for civil government, and a whole realm of liberty is found in natural life, precisely (in part) because the ends of these things in this order are increasingly, by God’s will, more general and diverse (worship: Rev. 19:10; Church government: Mt. 28:18–20; civil government: Rom. 13:3–4; natural life: Gen. 1:28). So far from partial conformity adding to or taking away from God’s Word, whether in worship, Church government, civil government or natural life, partial conformity, rightly exercised, is subordinate to God’s Word, fulfilling it (with more conformity being allowed in natural life than in civil government, and that more than in Church government, and that more than in worship).

A True Principle

If the principle is proven, that ceremonies inconvenient and scandalous (in some way) are not necessarily inherently sinful, but might be ethically done,¹¹⁰ then the remaining issues only respect in what circumstances, necessity and degrees thereof and

¹⁰⁸ Regarding what is coordinate with the Word, see ‘On Whatsoever is Beside the Word’ at ‘The Regulative Principle of Worship’ (RBO). On what is subordinate to the Word and in worship, see ‘On Primary Worship vs. a Subordinate Secondary Worship’ at ‘On the Definition of Worship’ (RBO) and ‘On Dt. 4:2’ at ‘The Regulative Principle of Worship’ (RBO).

¹⁰⁹ Everything here said is in consistency with WCF 1.6 & 21.1. The latter section speaks of worship as “so limited to his own revealed will, that...”

¹¹⁰ Vilant in a bit different context: “We should be feared for sin, and for that sin among the rest of adding to the Word of God; they who make these actions which are not transgressions of the Law to be sins, do highly provoke God; but they who make these actions which God not only permits, but also commands and commends, to be sins, they set themselves in the throne of God and annul his Law, and countermand the commands of the most high God.” Vilant, *Review & Examination*, pp. 15–16.

for what purposes such actions may (or may not) be warranted. To put forward a more refined and true principle in alternative to Gillespie's:

Things less than fully good, or impure, not inherently wrong, may in some circumstances, especially according to the degree of necessity, be personally, materially done, even in worship, public worship and Church government (though they occasion passive scandal in some), for the good in the things themselves and for attaining higher and weightier goods (in proportion to that degree), while seeking to avoid the greater hurt and scandal, without approving the impurities or what may be deficient in them.

Sprint essentially affirmed this principle, while Gillespie essentially denied it.¹¹¹ An easy way to see the truth of it is to consider the following example (which Gillespie practiced): To read a Bible translation as the Word of God from the pulpit which has wrong readings, bad translations and mistranslations in it (and hence to call those things God's Word and for people to believe they are God's Word when they are not) is inconvenient, impure and scandalous. Yet the KJV, NKJV, ESV, NASB, NRSV, ASV and the Bible version your church uses, and you use personally, all have wrong readings, bad translations and mistranslations in them. One might respond:

"But the translation we read from is the best we have, or in cases where it is not, we are helpless to publicly change it when our authorities so impose it according to their office and (erroneous) discretion. If these acts are sinful, we would have to not read God's Word at all and forfeit his worship ordinance of public Scripture reading, despite his command to maintain such (1 Tim. 4:13).

Yet it is better to worship approximately, though defectively, yet in real participation (though only by a certain degree) with God's ordinance, than not at all, and it is necessary for the higher good of our well-being and salvation to do these inconvenient, impure and scandalous actions and ceremonies under necessity as a requisite for the good that cannot be brought about without them."

Now you are gaining understanding. To see the above argument taken further, and for delineating the principle's limits, read the Intro to '[Some Impure Worship may be \(and even must be\) Lawfully, Personally Performed in Some Circumstances for the Inherent](#)

¹¹¹ Gillespie, *Dispute*, pt. 2, [ch. 1](#), p. 10. Gillespie's main error is, in the case of not inherently wrong actions, not distinguishing the formal end of the action (which may be good) from the accidental ill effects it may have. That no actions-not-inherently-wrong with good ends, with accidental ill effects, may be done, is impossible to maintain.

Good in it & for Higher, Good Reasons'.¹¹² Bible verses follow the Intro illustrating various aspects of this principle (some in respect of laymen). Quotes from Westminster and many reformed divines follow that.

To give an approved instance of the above principle and to illustrate it: The partial-conformist Paul, when he offered animal sacrifices, or arranged such for others ([Acts 21:23–26](#); [Num. 6:13–14](#)) after Christ's death, was, under a certain degree of necessity for a greater good ([Acts 21:20–23](#)), fulfilling the good in this deficient, yet lawful worship to God, without approving the deficiencies as best. Note these deficiencies in the material worship were in some ways contrary to Gospel principles ([Acts 15:10, 28](#); [Gal. 3:19, 23, 24–25](#); [4:1–3, 5–7, 9, 24, 30–31](#); [5:1, 7](#); [Col. 2:14, 17, 20, 22](#); [Tit. 1:14](#); [Heb. 7:16, 27](#); [8:7–8, 10](#); [9:9–11, 28](#); [10:1–2, 10–11](#); [13:9](#)) and the authorities would not remove them. Many may have accused Paul, knowing his convictions and what he had previously preached ([Acts 21:21](#), albeit in a different context with a different kind of people for different formal reasons, e.g. [Gal. 2–4](#) & [Col. 2:8–23](#)), of compromising, conforming, backsliding and having temporizing motives for his own ease, avoiding suffering and of breaking the solemn, Gospel covenant. Ought not one to separate from such a scandalous Christian minister, who, for a time and in the circumstances, materially conformed at the permitted, yet restricting indulgence of the tyrannous authorities over God's Church (as the rest of the story manifests, [Acts 21:26–33](#))? God forbid.

Nature's Light & Common Experience

If one could not morally, materially conform to something not inherently wrong, though it be inconvenient and may occasion some degree of passive scandal in someone somewhere, one could not live in society in everyday life (as Jesus and Paul told us to do: [Jn. 17:15](#); [1 Cor. 5:9–10](#)), function in or govern a family, and one would get fired from work very quickly. To decline doing what is inconvenient for higher goods is to choose and accomplish the lesser good, or to fall short of the glory of God, which is sin ([Rom. 3:23](#)).

¹¹² at 'On Impurities in Worship' (RBO).

Nor can the context of public worship be completely divorced from the ethical sphere of common life, because the most fundamental law of nature is to pursue good and avoid evil¹¹³ (Ps. 34:14; Amos 5:14; 1 Pet. 3:11). This natural law, inherent to us, falls under moral obedience to God in the First Commandment.¹¹⁴ But public worship ordinances, being ceremonial in nature, and the Regulative Principle of Worship,¹¹⁵ are secondary to that and less fundamental, flowing out of the Second Commandment.¹¹⁶ Further, the good of persons' salvation, besides being grounded in the First Commandment, also derives in significant part from the moral Sixth Commandment, both of which may override the ceremonies of the First Table of the Law.¹¹⁷ Thus moral obedience and serving the good of the cause of the Gospel (including through the principles we have been discussing) underlies, penetrates, takes precedence over and foundationally supports public worship. To deny this and affirm the opposite is to wrench the Great Commission backwards (Mt. 28:18-20).

To add further force to the inevitable conclusion: That inconvenient and in-some-way scandalous actions might have ethically sufficient cause, may be more quickly conceded in the realm of Church government than in public worship (as Church government in this fallen world is impossible without the true principle put forth above). But public worship ordinances flow out of Church government (Rom. 10:14-15),¹¹⁸ and Church government and governing is worship in a secondary sense.¹¹⁹ Hence Church

¹¹³ So Aquinas, *Commentary on Matthew*, on Mt. 6:9, §585, "naturally man desires two things, namely, to seek good and avoid evil." "naturaliter homo duo desiderat, scilicet consequi bonum et vitare malum." *Idem, Summa Contra Gentiles*, ch. 90, "Because just as good and evil apprehended are the object of the sensible appetite, so are they the object of the intellectual appetite. For it belongs to both to pursue good and to avoid evil, whether so in truth, or in the estimation." "Sicut enim bonum et malum apprehensum sunt obiectum appetitus sensibilis, ita et appetitus intellectivi. Utriusque enim est prosequi bonum et fugere malum, vel secundum veritatem vel secundum aestimationem." *Idem, Summa*, pt. 1 of pt. 2, q. 23, art. 4, "1 answer", "in the irascible passions, the aptitude, or inclination to seek good, or to shun evil, is presupposed as arising from the concupiscible faculty, which regards good or evil absolutely." "In passionibus autem irascibilis, praesupponitur quidem aptitudo vel inclinatio ad prosequendum bonum vel fugiendum malum, ex concupiscibili, quae absolute respicit bonum vel malum."

¹¹⁴ See 'On the 1st Commandment' (RBO).

¹¹⁵ See 'The Regulative Principle of Worship' (RBO).

¹¹⁶ See 'On the 2nd Commandment' (RBO).

¹¹⁷ See 'On the Relations Between the 1st & 2nd Tables of the Law' (RBO).

¹¹⁸ Just as ministers are the proper administrators of public, Church worship ordinances (Acts 6:4; 1 Tim. 4:13-16), and ministers' power flows from Church government's power. It is the power of Church government that sends ministers (Rom. 10:15). This principle is foundational to Rutherford's book, *The Divine Right of Church-Government* (1646).

¹¹⁹ See 'Acts of Church Government & Discipline are Worship, in a Secondary Sense' at 'On the Governing of the Church & Church Discipline' (RBO).

government and public worship cannot be divorced, and if the principle holds in one, it must hold to some extent in the other.

More so, many reformed testimonies in the Post-Reformation in the ‘[Quotes](#)’ under the section ‘Some Impure Worship may be (and even must be) Lawfully, Personally Performed...’ (RBO), plainly evidence the moral and common sense necessity of our true principle and the actions of the reformed in following it (not to mention their further arguments for it there found).

Separatism & Reforming the Church

Gillespie’s principle is truly separatist. Regarding laymen, suppose the Lord’s Supper is not administered in every way it ought to be (as through much of Church history). A layman ought not then to conform to and participate in such an inconvenient and actively scandalous ceremony. This may preclude one from receiving the Supper for many years or most of one’s life. Yet in the time of Hannah, were not the Israelites still bound to receive the sacrificial meals in [1 Sam. 2:12–17](#), though the corrupt priests had greatly marred them, adjoining the threat of physical coercion; and were not the Israelites in some measure to be blamed for withdrawing from and abhorring the offering of the Lord?

Regarding ministers, if one today comes to believe it is most proper, apart from necessity,¹²⁰ to sit at a table for the Supper,¹²¹ or to do it with a common cup,¹²² and that’s not going to happen in the next few weeks or several months, must a minister abstain from dispensing an impure Supper (with the attendant consequences) or resign his charge to his congregation and go elsewhere? Do you have a framework in which to deal with this, while maintaining a clear and undoubting conscience?

If Church officers cannot ever comply with things not fully right, regarding worship or otherwise, then officers can never remain in the Church while seeking her reform.

¹²⁰ For this approved exception of necessity, see ‘[Is a Lord’s Supper Valid without Sitting at the Table? Yes](#)’ at ‘[Sitting at the Table](#)’ (RBO).

¹²¹ See ‘[Sitting at the Table](#)’ (RBO).

¹²² See ‘[The Common Cup](#)’ (RBO).

Most all the reformers were against Gillespie's principle as they continued in the Church (maintaining her unity) while performing practices they did not believe were fully right, while seeking to reform them to the Word,¹²³ which largely occurred. That was a great good, only able to be attained through that means and our principle.

Conclusion to Sprint & Gillespie

Gillespie, and all those who would follow his principle consistently, can't, because it is false. For whatever situations it may be true in, there is a large share of reality it cannot explain. All this is not to say the only issue with the English ceremonies was their inconvenience and scandalousness, or that they were wholly indifferent, but it is to show that if actions may be materially indifferent, yet inconvenient and in some way scandalous, and may be done under sufficient necessity, this greatly clears the way for the receiving of the principles of our authors' book and providing for the unity of Christ's Church in not-ideal or difficult circumstances.

Truth be told, both Sprint and Gillespie in large measure affirmed the same catholic principles of ethics (Sprint affirms nearly every single one Gillespie does),¹²⁴ yet they had very different circumstances and accordingly applied different weight to the various factors, as persons in necessarily variegated circumstances must and ought to do.

It has been argued Gillespie was the author of [Wholesome Severity Reconciled with Christian Liberty](#) (1645),¹²⁵ which tract in the Westminster context plead strongly for a practical, material accommodation in Church government and worship where parties do not formally agree together. The author says:

"By accommodation I understand an agreement of dissenters with the rest of the Church in practical conclusions, so that if any difference be, it is in their principles, not in their

¹²³ For some primary sources and further instruction on this, see '[On Reforming Church Ordinances](#)' at 'On the Ordinances, Order & Policy of the Church' (RBO).

¹²⁴ Sprint, *Cassander Anglicanus*, "Reformed Practices", "[practice](#)," pp. 192–211; this is a section where Sprint lists objections (which include the opponents' principles) and then responds to them, often with quotes from reformers. Sprint's replies often affirm, concede or implicitly assume the legitimacy of the objected principle (in the abstract), but then he adds further principles or reasons to resolve the points. See also pp. 173–211.

¹²⁵ Chris Coldwell, "Whose Severity? Was George Gillespie the Author of *Wholesome Severity Reconciled with Christian Liberty*?" in *The Anonymous Writings* (Naphtali Press, 2008), pp. 3–46.

practices, and so not obvious, apparent and scandalous to people. I had rather go two miles in an accommodation (yea as many as the Word of God will suffer me)...

For in that way there is no schism, no rent in Israel, but the Lord one, and his name one... the Accommodation is... to be... endeavored for and followed after, according to the apostle's rule, [Phil. 3:15-16](#)...

It shall be no grief of heart to you afterward, that you have pleased others as well as yourselves and have stretched your principles for an accommodation in Church government, as well as in worship, and that for the Church's peace and edification..."¹²⁶

Those agreeing about pursuing the principle of material accommodation included the English Parliament, Westminster, the London presbyterians, Samuel Bolton and the leading congregationalists.¹²⁷ If Gillespie affirmed we ought to accommodate things not fully right, even to being "somewhat straightened and bound up"¹²⁸ (citing a general rule of the Word in [Prov. 17:1](#), "Better is a dry morsel, and quietness therewith than a house

¹²⁶ Anonymous, *Wholesome Severity Reconciled with Christian Liberty, or the True Resolution of a Present Controversy concerning Liberty of Conscience*, here you have the question stated, the middle way betwixt popish tyranny and schismatizing liberty approved and also confirmed from Scripture and the testimonies of divines... and in conclusion a parænetic to the five apologists for choosing accommodation rather than toleration (London: Meredith, 1645), pp. 36-37, 39.

¹²⁷ Leading congregationalists (Westminster divines): "the aforesaid honorable committee appointed by an order of the honorable House of Commons, to find out ways of accommodating different judgments in the [Westminster] Assembly, the sub-committee of divines, consisting of two of us [congregationalists] and four others, appointed by that honorable committee to prepare ways and propositions of accommodation, brought in the main and most of what practically we desired, and we therein added, 'That if such a liberty shall seem in the wisdom of this honorable committee to be so prejudicial to the peace of the Church as not to be permitted, we humbly desire, the doctrinal principles wherein we differ about Church-government may be taken into serious consideration and some other way of accommodation in practice thought upon, as shall seem fit to this honorable committee:' and this was presented to that honorable committee and those twelve of the Assembly, to be transmitted..." *A Copy of a Remonstrance lately delivered in to the [Westminster] Assembly: by Thomas Goodwin, Jerem. Burroughs, William Greenhill, William Bridge, Philip Nye, Sidrach Simson and William Carter. Declaring the grounds and reasons of their Declining to bring in to the Assembly, their Model of Church-Government* (London, 1645), pp. 5-6.

London Provincial Assembly: "we do exhort our [Independent] brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that they would sadly lay to heart the inexpressible calamities which are brought upon our churches by their dividing from us; and that they would study for the time to come all ways of union and accommodation: And for our parts, we do here profess to all the world, that we are, have always been, and through the grace of God, shall ever be willing to study to find out any Scripture way wherein we may unite together with them..."

"we do here manifest our willingness (as we have already said) to accommodate with you according to the Word, in a way of union; And (such of us as are ministers) to preach up and to practice a mutual forbearance and toleration in all things that may consist with the fundamentals of religion, with the power of godliness and with that peace which Christ has established in his Church..." *A Vindication of the Presbyterian Government & Ministry...* (London: Meredith, 1650), pp. 11 & 121. Bolton (a Westminster divine), *The Arraignment of Error...* (London: Miller, 1646), pp. 348-60.

¹²⁸ Anonymous, *Wholesome Severity*, p. 39.

full of sacrifices with strife”), how is it he so strictly opposed accommodation with Erastian episcopacy, even when pressed with ministerial deprivation or not being able to enter the ministry at all?¹²⁹ Part of that answer is likely the same as one that Alexander Shields gave for the later Scottish Cameronians, that they considered not accommodating¹³⁰ to be obliging in a “broken and declining state of the Church,” but not when “the Church is... recovering her freedom from fetters” and “is growing and coming forward out of darkness and advancing, though weakly, in reformation.”¹³¹ Whether some accommodation, or conformity, may be made, and ought to be made to the Church in a broken and declining state, without separation therefrom, besides what has already been said, will be further examined from Scripture later.

But there is one principle Gillespie’s fore-analyzed rule did not allow him to adequately address.¹³² Sprint affirmed the principle of, regarding things not inherently wrong, avoiding the greater hurt and scandal,¹³³ which is a form of the fundamental

¹²⁹ Gillespie refused becoming ordained by a bishop when that was the only means available, this delaying his ordination for several years: David Lachman, ‘Preface to New Edition’ in Gillespie, *Aaron’s Rod Blossoming* (1646; Sprinkle, 1985). The lawfulness of ordination by a bishop will be argued by our authors below; reformed testimonies with cogent reasons for such can be read at ‘*Though a Single Bishop has No Rightful Power of Himself to Ordain, yet the Church’s Ordination may be Received through a Bishop*’ at ‘On Prelacy & Episcopacy’ (RBO). The difference largely lies in Gillespie’s principle of not being able to perform, or allow to be performed with respect to oneself, an inconvenient and scandalous ceremony. Contrary to such, see ‘*On Performing Necessary Duties though Others Sin in Them*’ at ‘On Impurities in Worship’ (RBO).

¹³⁰ Shields and the Cameronians went further and justified separation from the established Church government *in toto*, materially, on these terms, something Gillespie did not.

¹³¹ Shields, *An Enquiry into Church-Communion, or a Treatise against Separation from the Revolution Settlement of this National Church, as it was settled anno 1689 and 1690...* (1706; Edinburgh: Gray, 1747), pp. 28–29 & 34; Shields, Thomas Lining & William Boyd, *An Account of the Methods & Motives of the Late Union & Submission to the Assembly...* (London, 1691), p. 42. This distinction was a primary reason why the last three Cameronian ministers, Shields, Lining and Boyd, joined the 1690 Revolution Church of Scotland.

¹³² Gillespie acknowledges “in evils of punishment, we may choose a lesser” (*Dispute*, pt. 2, ch. 1, p. 10); cf. 2 Sam. 24:10–14. Yet the ethical issues of the permissibility of choosing material evils in justified circumstances go far deeper and wider than being limited to punishments. See Fentiman, ‘*Theses on the Ethics of Civil Voting, with a Correction to the Booklet, Christ Centered Voting*’ throughout at ‘On Voting’ (RBO) and ‘*An Extended Introduction*’ at ‘On the Ethics of Material Cooperation with, & Associations with Evil’ (RBO).

¹³³ See ‘*On the Ethical Principle of Avoiding the Greater Evil*’ at ‘On Ethics & Virtue’ (RBO) and ‘*On Avoiding the Greater Scandal & Harm as Seeking the Greater Good*’ at ‘On Scandal & Offenses’ (RBO). The resisting, indulged, Scottish ministers, who will be discussed below, acted on this principle: “Mr. George Hutchison and some others were peremptorily against subscribing the paper, and the plurality were for signing and presenting it in their names: yet when they considered the necessity of unity in this matter, and that if they were not of one mind, it would do more hurt than good, they came all into this, to use it as a directory;” Robert Wodrow, *The History of the Sufferings of the Church of Scotland from the Restoration to the Revolution*, 4 vols. (Glasgow: Blackie & Son, 1832), 2.216.

natural law of avoiding evil and doing the greatest good attainable.¹³⁴ If God may graciously choose for us the lesser miserable evil, may not we concur (2 Chron. 12:5–8), when He reasons with us to do so (Jer. 27:12–13)? Richard Baxter later put it this way:

“Though we think not that men may [morally] command us to destroy our neighbors’ souls by scandal, yet when disobedience to a ruler’s law is likely to do more hurt than the scandal taken at it comes to, we are for avoiding the greater hurt.”¹³⁵

In another place Baxter expanded on this with more helpful specificity:

“Indeed if the thing commanded be such as is simply evil and forbidden us by God in all cases whatsoever, then no one’s commands can make it lawful. But if it be a thing that is only inconvenient or unlawful by some lesser accident, then the command of authority may preponderate as a more weighty accident.

If it be lawful to give a thief my purse to save my life, which is not lawful for him to demand or take, then sure it is lawful to obey a king, a parent, a master or a pastor in things not evil in themselves, though they unlawfully command them.

I say not that we must do so in all things which are evil but by accident: for some accidents may make it so great an evil as no man’s command can preponderate and make it lawful: but in some cases it is so, though not in all.”¹³⁶

If the 5th Commandment be true, is it not worse, Baxter said, “to scandalize our rulers... than to scandalize inferiors (other things being equal)”?¹³⁷ When might the varied factors tip the scales the other way? Baxter answers:

“Yet if the miscarriage be so great in the [authorities’] ordering even of these circumstances or in the manner of duties, as shall overthrow the duty itself and be

¹³⁴ See theses 6, 14, 23, 25–27, 35–37, 39, 41–42, 46, 48–49 of Fentiman, ‘Theses on the Ethics of Civil Voting, with a Correction to the Booklet, Christ Centered Voting’ at ‘On Voting’ (RBO).

¹³⁵ Baxter, *The English Nonconformity as under King Charles II & King James II Truly Stated & Argued* (London, 1689), ch. 2, p. 14.

¹³⁶ Baxter, *The Cure of Church Divisions...* (London, 1670), pt. 1, direction 34, pp. 194–95.

¹³⁷ Baxter, *On Worship & Catholicity*, p. 79. Byfield: “Fourthly, that when the authority of the magistrate or Church has determined concerning the use of things indifferent, we are not now left free, nor are bound to look at the scandal of particular persons, but must make conscience of it that we offend not the Church, by working a greater hurt or loss to the Church than the particular hurt of private persons can extend unto. In such cases as this, the apostle’s rule holds: ‘If any man seem to be contentious, we have no such custom, nor the Church of God,’ 1 Cor. 11:16. And we are bound, in this text of the apostle Peter [1 Pet. 2:13], to obey the human ordinances of men in authority; from which obligation other men’s offense cannot free us. And the apostle charges us to look to it that we offend not the Church in prescribed ordinances and that we be careful not to offend private men in free ceremonies.” *Commentary, on 1 Pet. 2:13*, pp. 436–37.

inconsistent with the ends, or bring greater evils upon the Church than our refusing to obey... then... we are not bound to follow... in such a case, but otherwise we are.”¹³⁸

Gillespie’s principle is wrong because it is simplistic, yet it may be modified to penetrate the truth more accurately and deeply. John Corbet, a later English, congregationalist puritan, followed in the train of Baxter. His conclusion on the matter for laymen in public worship applies equally to ministers and reflects the thought of Sprint and the main trajectory of the Westminster divines:

“If superiors command that which is above their sphere to command, namely, things not necessary *in genere* [in their kind], yet if they be not simply evil, subjects may¹³⁹ do those things, unless they be evil in their consequence to a higher degree than the not doing of them would be. In this case it is not formal obedience, but they are done for the end’s sake and to avoid evil.”¹⁴⁰

Having seen partial conformity argued, confirmation will be added by the testimonies of many divines (with many insights and further arguments of theirs in the footnotes) before partial conformity is demonstrated to be consistent with the Westminster standards.

Testimonies & Westminster Standards

The Reformers, Puritans & Westminster Divines

Sprint quotes, summarizes or references the following reformers as allowing inconvenient, non-necessary ceremonies to be tolerated and done in some less-than-ideal

¹³⁸ Baxter, *Five Disputations on Church Government & Worship* (1659), ch. 12, ‘It may be very sinful to command some ceremonies, when yet it may be the subjects’ duty to use them when they are commanded’, p. 461.

¹³⁹ Note Corbet does not say they “must” do those things.

¹⁴⁰ Corbet (1620–1680), *Of Divine Worship*, pt. 3, §6 in *The Remains of the Reverend & Learned Mr. John Corbet...* (d. 1680; London: Thomas Parkhurst, 1684), pt. 3, p. 218. For more from Corbet on the issue, see ‘John Corbet – Material Obedience for Good’ under ‘Principles of Union & Separation about Church Assemblies with Impurities of Worship in Them’ at ‘On Impurities in Worship’ (RBO).

circumstances: Bucer, Vermigli, Bullinger, Calvin, Beza,¹⁴¹ Gwalter and Zepper.¹⁴² John Burges (d. 1635), a godly, partially conforming English minister influenced by Cartwright, cited further for the same: Hooper, Jewel, Fulke, Rainolds, Whitaker, Humphrey, Perkins and others.¹⁴³ The following expressed likewise: Wolfgang Musculus,¹⁴⁴ the reformed Hungarian Catholic Confession (1562),¹⁴⁵ Jerome Zanchi,¹⁴⁶

¹⁴¹ Theodore Beza: "...we think that some things are tolerated which should not at all be endured. We are not spending so much time on those linen vestments that we would want the progress of God's Word to be disturbed because of them—even just a little. Yet we judge that they have acted correctly and wisely who have thrown out of their churches that whole form of dress, which is more suited to actors than to ministers of the Word, as well as other remnants of paganism. For surely they can do a great deal of harm, as experience itself has taught; and they cannot help at all..." *A Clear & Simple Treatise on the Lord's Supper* (1559; Reformation Heritage Books, 2016), pp. 143–44. Another relevant quote of Beza's can be found under 'On Dt. 4:2 & 12:32' at 'The Regulative Principle of Worship' (RBO).

¹⁴² Sprint, *Cassander Anglicanus*, "Reformed Practices", "practice", pp. 162–68, 173–74, 185. See also *Whether it be a Mortal Sin to Transgress Civil Laws... The Judgement of Philip Melancton... The Resolution of D. Hen. Bullinger, and D. Rod. Gualter, of D. Martin Bucer and D. Peter Martyr, concerning the Apparel of Ministers and other Indifferent Things* ([London: Lugge, 1570]). The sentiments of these divines and others can be read at 'Writings & Quotes' at 'Vestments, Black Genevan Gowns, Collars & Dress for Public Worship' (RBO). See also more such testimonies of reformers which can be read at large in *Original Letters & the Zurich Letters relative to the English Reformation*, vol. 1 (1549–1553), 2 (1548–1558), 3 (1558–1602), ed. Hastings Robinson (Cambridge: Parker Society, 1846–1847).

¹⁴³ John Burges (1563–1635). Burges's references are as related by Ames (who does not contradict Burges on this point), *Fresh Suit*, pt. 1, ch. 4, §1, p. 368. Burgess only subscribed to the Anglican requirements upon being deposed for not having done so, upon which he was restored; *Answer Rejoined*, p. 23.

Burgess: "For the Church of God, I beseech you by our Lord Jesus Christ, that if you think as I do, that the ceremonies in question, however they may seem to us inconvenient in some respects, yet, are not unlawful, but such as men (not imprisoned with prejudice) may with good consciences observe as matters of external order, imposed on us by lawful authority." *The Lawfulness of Kneeling in the Act of Receiving the Lord's Supper...* (London: Matthewes, 1631), pp. 118–19.

¹⁴⁴ Wolfgang Musculus: "But in case a man be so far profited in the religion of Christ that he can take little or no profit of any tradition, yet if the tradition be such that it may serve the unfaithful multitude to edifying, let him keep it also for charity's sake (in which respect they that be perfect be debtors to the unperfect), lest he do hurt by his example those whom he ought in his whole purpose of life to do good. Yea though it appear to be a meat, man's tradition which is openly kept in the Church, the Christian man is godly and desirous of quiet, shall keep it also, though not with that reverence which is due unto godly things yet for all that without contempt, so that he understand that there be nothing in it unlawful or dishonest. For as much as we be men, and do live also in the Church among men, it is not meet that in the behavior, rites and traditions of men, we should be found to be overthwart, crabbed and crooked. Let godly things be observed as godly things should be, and men's matters as matters of men ought to be, so far forth as they may be observed with a free and clear conscience. But I say not this to defend the Popish traditions, rites and services..." *Common Places of Christian Religion...* (London, 1563), Traditions, 6. "How Traditions ought to be Observed", p. 366.

¹⁴⁵ See the quote at 'Creeds & Confessions' under 'Vestments' at 'Vestments, Black Genevan Gowns, Collars & Dress for Public Worship' (RBO).

¹⁴⁶ Jerome Zanchi: "For though these habits [garments] are not of themselves, that is, of their own nature, evil or unclean, yet they cannot be altogether free from impurity by reason of their having been

numerous of the Anglican bishops,¹⁴⁷ Laurence Chaderton,¹⁴⁸ Edward Dering,¹⁴⁹ Richard Greenham,¹⁵⁰ John Knewstub,¹⁵¹ Byfield (saying “as all sound divines confess”),¹⁵² Arthur

previously and so recently abused. It certainly cannot be denied but that they may at least afford occasion to much mischief and to the grossest superstitions...”

“our brethren have therefore judged it expedient that some of the more eminent and discreet bishops should be written to, and requested to advise the rest, that, should not the queen by any means be induced to revoke her orders, they ought not themselves on this account to choose rather to desert their posts than to obey the royal command ; for that there seems no reason why it should be lawful for a pastor to forsake his flock, so long as he is freely permitted to teach, and to administer the sacraments according to the word of God, although he may be forced to do some things of which he cannot altogether approve; provided only that they are not such as are intrinsically and of their own nature sinful...”

But if things in their own nature indifferent be prescribed by law and the queen's command, since it is the only alternative, either to resign one's post or to yield obedience to such a command, we ought rather to obey, but with a due protest against it; and the people should be instructed why and for what reason obedience has been paid to such a command... And this opinion is so plain and evident, both from the sacred writings and the fathers and ecclesiastical histories that to adduce any proof of it to those who are even moderately versed in the scriptures would be altogether superfluous. For a lawful and necessary calling is never to be deserted for the sake of things which are in their own nature indifferent.” *Zurich Letters*, vol. 3, Letter 158 (1571), p. 370 & Letter 157 (1571), 366.

¹⁴⁷ Such as bishops John Jewel, Edmund Grindal, Robert Horn: *Zurich Letters*, vol. 3, pp. 123–24, 277.

¹⁴⁸ “Chaderton stood at the very centre of Cambridge puritanism from the 1560s until his retirement in 1622. He was a noted presbyterian and closely involved in the classic movement... by the end of the century he can be found defending the puritan position before King James at the Hampton Court Conference in the most moderate terms.” Peter Lake, *Moderate Puritans & the Elizabethan Church* (Cambridge Univ. Press, 1982), p. 4. On Chaderton's views and practices, see chs. 1, 3 & 10 of Lake, *Moderate Puritans* and more fully Lake, *Laurence Chaderton & the Cambridge Moderate Puritan Tradition*, PhD thesis (Cambridge University, 1978), unpublished.

¹⁴⁹ “Dering was perhaps the leading puritan scholar of his generation.” Lake, *Moderate Puritans*, p. 5. See ch.2, “*Moderate beginnings: the Case of Edward Dering*” in Lake, *Moderate Puritans*, pp. 16–25.

¹⁵⁰ John H. Primus on Greenham: “He states that ‘just obedience’ may be given an ‘unjust commandment,’ as long as ‘it bee in things meerly outward,’ and then comments on the dispute over sitting or kneeling for the Eucharist: ‘As for such things, Let us do as much as wee can with the peace of the church lest wee make the remedy of the evil wors then the evil it self.’ (REM 524, fol. 10v.) This approach of ‘pragmatic compromise’ formed the core of his cooperative Puritanism. (Patrick Collinson, *The Elizabethan Puritan Movement*, 364.)” *Richard Greenham: Portrait of an Elizabethan Pastor* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1998), pp. 64–65; see also pp. 63–65. The Collinson reference reads: “Once again the evidence requires us to imagine not a clean break with Anglicanism but the kind of pragmatic compromise which was so characteristic of Elizabethan puritanism.”

¹⁵¹ See the references to him in Patrick Collinson, *The Elizabethan Puritan Movement* (University of California Press, 1967), pp. 218, 232, 265, 386, 403, 455–56, 458.

¹⁵² Byfield: “Things inconvenient, even in matters of religion, may be commanded in some cases: as when it is to redeem a far worse inconvenience. For of two evils of punishments, the magistrate may take the less, as well as any other private man. And if that subjects to prevent worse inconveniences may use inconvenient ceremonies, then may the magistrate, to prevent worse inconveniences, command inconvenient ceremonies. If the apostles may use the inconvenient Jewish ceremonies, then the apostles may enjoin for a time the use of inconvenient ceremonies: as they did make ordinances about things which yet they called “burdens,” Acts 15 [v. 28].

And Moses may make an ordinance about the use of a bill of divorcement which yet was a grievous inconvenience to redeem a worse inconvenience. But if magistrates do appoint inconvenient things and burden the Church with them, when there would be no great inconvenience to the Church if such things

were not, then such magistrates must give their account to Christ for so doing; but yet the people are bound to obey still, because we cannot be freed from our subjection laid upon us by God except it appear to us that they command not only an inconvenience, but a sin, as all sound divines confess." *Commentary, on 1 Pet. 2:13*, pp. 434–35.

Hildersham,¹⁵³ Richard Sibbes,¹⁵⁴ Richard Bernard,¹⁵⁵ George Gifford,¹⁵⁶ Ball (speaking for “the nonconformists”),¹⁵⁷ John Downname,¹⁵⁸ Thomas Edwards,¹⁵⁹ John Ley,¹⁶⁰ the

¹⁵³ Arthur Hildersham, *A Treatise of the Ministry of the Church of England, wherein is handled this Question: Whether it be to be separated from, or joined unto. Which is discussed in Two Letters, the one [for joining] written for it [by Hildersham], the other against it [by Francis Johnson]* (Low Countries, 1595), pp. 79 & 117.

¹⁵⁴ Richard Sibbes, *A Consolatory Letter to an Afflicted Conscience Full of Pious Admonitions & Divine Instructions* (d. 1635; London, 1641), p. 5.

¹⁵⁵ Richard Bernard, *Christian Advertisements & Counsels of Peace, also Dissuasions from the Separatists’ Schism...* (London: Kyngston, 1608), ‘*Christian Advertisements & Counsels of Peace*’, pp. 1–20.

¹⁵⁶ Gifford, *Short Reply*, pp. 11, 91–92, 98.

¹⁵⁷ Ball: “The practice of the apostles in submitting to Jewish ceremonies is a pattern and samplar for us, what we may and must do in receiving or refusing significant, scandalous, inconvenient ceremonies devised by men, imposed by authority, abused to superstition or idolatry. For in what cases they admitted of Jewish ceremonies, in the same or like, it is lawful, yea necessary for us to receive and tolerate by practice ceremonies of like nature devised by men.” *Power of Godliness*, bk. 1, ch. 2, p. 15.

“Your long labor in setting down the faults to be found in our Liturgy is to small purpose. The Nonconformists do except against many things appointed in the Book, as inconvenient at least, and such as should be taken away or reformed, as the reading of Apocryphal books under the title of holy Scripture, specially such parts as be corrupt for matter: The cross and surplice as idolothites by participation and signs of mystical signification: The corruptions in the translations: and some things in the forms of burial, matrimony, thanksgiving for women after child-bed, etc. But these they condemn not as idolatry, nor as that which makes the worship itself false and idolatrous. It is one thing to say such a rite is inconvenient, superstitious, scandalous borrowed from the Papists, not warranted by the Word of God, in the use will-worship, if the word be taken largely; another that the worship itself is false and idolatrous.” idem, *Answer to Two Treatises*, ch. 2, p. 29.

¹⁵⁸ John Downname: “And as the people are not for these wants [lacks] and imperfections to leave the public service of God, so neither (as I take it) are God’s ministers to forsake their ministry, without the help whereof the people cannot publicly worship God, nor be built up in Christ and edified in their holy faith, rather than they will undergo some rites and ceremonies, though very inconvenient, if it cannot be proved that they are in their use simply evil and unlawful: Neither do I think any inconvenience so great as the neglect of preaching Christ crucified, etc. 1 Cor. 9:16.” *Lectures upon the Four First Chapters of the Prophecy of Hosea...* (London: Kyngston, 1608), on Hos. 2, p. 275.

¹⁵⁹ Thomas Edwards (a presbyterian) against the Independent divines at Westminster: “Whether by ‘the sinful evil of those corruptions, in the public worship and government of this Church,’ you understand... the Book of Common Prayer, the entrance into our ministry by ordination of bishops and living under the episcopal government?... Now if you mean... [this], that which usually was called, Old conformity, in opposition to the New [under Archbishop Laud]: So I deny that all do now generally acknowledge and decry that as sinfully evil; which appears thus: Because that remonstrance presented to the House of Commons in the beginning of the Parliament, subscribed by many hundred godly ministers, conformists, and non-conformists for reformation in worship, doctrine, government and discipline: The government, worship and ceremonies were impleaded, in respect of many inconveniences and evil consequents; but petitioning against them as sinfully evil and absolutely unlawful was declined: And there are many parliament men and ministers who have a great zeal to the present reformation in casting out the hierarchy and ceremonies, who are not yet convinced that all their former practice in the way of old conformity was sinful: But as those times were, do judge they did lawfully continue their standing in their places and in this Church... Which answer... is not here given by me in the least to plead for the hierarchy, ceremonies or present Liturgy (for I heartily desire their removal), but only to show the Apologists’ mistake in asserting that all do now so generally acknowledge and decry them as sinfully evil... We [be] as much

London, presbyterian, Provincial Assembly,¹⁶¹ Pierre¹⁶² and Lewis Du Moulin,¹⁶³ Isaac Ambrose,¹⁶⁴ Zachary Crofton,¹⁶⁵ Thomas Manton,¹⁶⁶ Richard Baxter,¹⁶⁷ John Corbet,¹⁶⁸

abhorring bowing to altars, publishing the Declaration for Sports, etc. as you: and witnessing more frequently against them in our ministry than some of you." *Antapologia*, pp. 15-16.

¹⁶⁰ John Ley, *A Debate concerning the English Liturgy...* (London: A.M., 1656), §3, p. 11, where Ley cites approvingly and expounds Calvin's phrase: *tolerabiles ineptiae*. Ley's book is consistent with that trajectory.

¹⁶¹ They write in an approving context: "There were many godly and learned Non-conformists of this last age, that were persuaded in their consciences that they could not hold communion with the Church of England in receiving the sacrament kneeling without sin, yet did they not separate from her. Indeed, in that particular act they withdrew, but yet so as that they held communion with her in the rest, being far from a negative, much more from a positive separation. Nay some [ministers] of them, even then when our churches were full of sinful mixtures, with great zeal and learning, defended them so far, as to write against those that did separate from them. He that will never communicate with any Church, till everything that offends be removed out of it, must tarry till the great Day of Judgment..." *Vindication of Presbyterian Government*, p. 117. Elliot Vernon says the *Vindication* was "substantially the work of the Smectymnuan Edmund Calamy." ch. 5, "Zachary Crofton, the Restoration Church of England, & the Dilemmas of Partial Conformity, 1662-65" in eds. Jake Griesel & Esther Counsell, *Reformed Identity & Conformity in England, 1559-1714* (Manchester Univ. Press, 2024). See also especially footnote 436.

¹⁶² As quoted in Joseph Bingham, *The Works*, new ed. R. Bingham in 10 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1855), 10.129.

¹⁶³ Lewis Du Moulin, *Declaratory Considerations upon the Present State of Affairs of England by Way of Supplement* (London: 1679), pp. 103 & 110.

¹⁶⁴ M'Crie: "He would have complied with many of the requirements of uniformity, and was willing to read the liturgy, but scrupling at some of the ceremonies, he was ejected." *Annals of English Presbytery*, p. 274.

¹⁶⁵ Vernon, ch. 5, "Zachary Crofton, the Restoration Church of England, & the Dilemmas of Partial Conformity, 1662-65" in eds. Griesel & Counsell, *Reformed Identity*. "In line with presbyterian arguments formed during the 1640's and 1650's and, indeed, the longer Reformed tradition, the vast majority of ejected [English] ministers [in 1662] rejected outright separatism."

¹⁶⁶ Roger Thomas, "Parties in Nonconformity" in eds. C. Bolam, J. Goring, H. Short & R. Thomas, *The English Presbyterians from Elizabethan Puritanism to Modern Unitarianism* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1968), pp. 95-96.

¹⁶⁷ Baxter: "If the mischoosing of such circumstances by Church-governors be but an inconvenience and do not destroy the ordinance itself, or frustrate the ends of it, we are to obey: 1. For he is the judge in his own work, and not we: 2. the thing is not sinful, though inconvenient. 3. Obedience is commanded to our lawful governors... But if a governor so misdetermine but a mode or circumstance as will overthrow the substance and ends of the worship, I would not obey, except some greater evil were likely to follow my not obeying at that particular season than the frustrating of the duty itself would come to..."

In all such cases where governors act not as usurpers in a matter that they have no authority in, but only misdo their own work, it much concerns the subjects to foresee what's likely to be the consequents of their obeying or disobeying, and accordingly to do that which tends most to the ends of the work: still holding to this rule, that we must obey in all things lawful... And when we do obey in a case of miscommanding, it is not a doing evil that good may come of it, as some do misconceive: But it is only a submitting to that which is ill commanded, but not evil in him that does submit. It is the determiner that is the cause of the inconvenience, and not the obeyer." *Five Disputations*, 5th Disputation, ch. 2, pp. 423-24.

¹⁶⁸ Corbet (1620-1680) was a congregationalist puritan. See 'John Corbet - Material Obedience for Good' under 'Principles of Union & Separation about Church Assemblies with Impurities of Worship in Them' at 'On Impurities in Worship' (RBO).

Samuel Shaw,¹⁶⁹ Philip¹⁷⁰ and Matthew Henry,¹⁷¹ James Owen,¹⁷² William Tong (speaking for dissenting ministers)¹⁷³ and even those prominent, leading Scottish covenanters Baillie¹⁷⁴ and James Durham.¹⁷⁵ William Ames, while being a significant

¹⁶⁹ Shaw took an indulgence, yet refused reordination and a preferment: M'Crie, *Annals of English Presbytery*, pp. 252-53.

¹⁷⁰ While Philip Henry was in general a non-conformist, he was "unsworn" (p. 100) as to the issue and practice of ceremonies. "3. Concerning Ceremonies. We desire there may be no law to impose them either on ministers or people, and do not desire a law to forbid them; but, 'let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.' [Phil. 3:15-16] Such as wearing the surplice in worship; bowing to the east, or at the name of Jesus; churching of women; observation of holy days; consecrating of churches; keeping of Lent." Matthew Henry, *The Life of the Rev. Philip Henry...* Appendix 18, p. 396 in *The Lives of Philip & Matthew Henry*, ed. J.B. Williams, 2 vols. in 1 (Banner of Truth, 1974).

When Henry was barred from the ministry at the Great Ejection (1662), he, along with "all the sober nonconformists generally in those parts," (according to Matthew Henry) chose to refrain from publicly preaching and to materially submit to the unjust discipline for the sake of public order and the persuasiveness of a meek and peaceable spirit till the unjust sentence could be removed when persons at large may come to a better mind about it, citing four historic precedents: Henry, *Life of*, pp. 101-5.

Henry received the second indulgence of 1679 and was of the same mind as our puritan authors below on submitting to certain impositions of the civil magistrate: "All the power to be owned in bishops, is derived to them from the King; and, in those things wherein the King has power in church matters, in those things we may obey the bishops, as his delegates and substitutes... the law calls the King patron-general of England. His appointing me to preach [in the second indulgence], supposes I must have hearers, and those, of necessity, out of some parish or other. What we do is to serve the present necessity, and not of choice." Henry, *Life of*, pp. 129-30.

¹⁷¹ See Matthew Henry's approving language and defense of his father, from Paul's example, in accepting the second indulgence (1679) and regarding Philip mostly submitting to his unjust deposition along with "all the sober nonconformists generally in those parts." Henry, *Life of*, pp. 102 & 129.

¹⁷² James Owen, *Moderation a Virtue, or, The Occasional Conformist Justified from the Imputation of Hypocrisy...* (London: Baldwin, 1703), pp. 7-9.

¹⁷³ William Tong: "There are those amongst us that could bear with the use of these things, but cannot declare their approbation of them and their assent and consent to all of them; this would be to espouse and commend those things which at best they look upon but as *Tolerabiles Ineptiae...*" *A Defence of Mr. M[atthew]. H[enry]'s Brief Enquiry into the Nature of Schism & the Vindication of it...* (London: T.S., 1693), ch. 4, p. 77.

¹⁷⁴ Baillie: "The English Liturgy which contained the most tolerable fooleries of the old order of Sarum was winked at in the beginning of King Edward and Queen Elizabeth's reign by many gracious men overruled by the prepotent Popish faction, hoping withal in due time by the power of preaching to get all that trash cast out and all the mist of these shadows dispelled..." *A Parallel or Brief Comparison of the Liturgy with the Mass-Book...* (London: Paine, 1641), Preface.

¹⁷⁵ Durham: "...the business about Easter and ceremonies... ordinarily such debates pretend some lawfulness or unlawfulness in the thing contended for and are to be counted amongst the jangling debates that the men of God are to eschew... 1. That, as there is a necessity of suffering some difference in doctrine, so is there also a necessity to bear with some differences in circumstances in the external manner of worship, etc. and men would not soon offend at every difference, nor be displeased if it proceed not from affectation of singularity, unfaithfulness or some other corrupt rise. And we will find great condescendency in the greatest men both of old and late in things that are not sinful in themselves for keeping of union in the Church: and thus far the apostles' practice of becoming all things to all will warrant. Zanchius in an epistle to this purpose gives both many examples of and reasons for this. 2... the condemning of the way and manner used by others as having some great absurdity in it, and the pressing of their way, even in circumstances, upon others; These and such things are to be eschewed: and so indeed there is no way to

precedent for the trajectory that Gillespie would follow in, yet himself taught things at variance with Gillespie's principle.¹⁷⁶

The remarks of the divine-right presbyterian Cartwright on the surplice (a white garment to be worn by the clergy in public worship) are typical of their thought, that a more important, greater necessity may outweigh inconvenience and passive scandal in such actions. The surplice derived from the early Church, before the rise of Romanism, and had not been given an official moral or spiritual significance by the official Book of Common Prayer.¹⁷⁷

"As touching that point whether the minister should wear it, although it be inconvenient: the truth is that I dare not be author to any to forsake his pastoral charge for the inconvenience thereof: considering that this charge, being an absolute commandment of the Lord, ought not to be laid aside for a simple inconvenience or uncomeliness of a thing which in the own nature is indifferent.

The offence in occasioning the weak to fall and the wicked to be confirmed in their wickedness is one of the foulest spots in the surplice, and which of all other can make it most detestable in the eyes of a godly minister... But when it is laid in the scales with the preaching of the Word of God, which is so necessary for him that is called thereunto,

peace in these things but to forbear; for it is more easy to forbear some new thing than to make others alter what is old, except there be some reason in the matter to move to this."

"The judicious and great divine Calvin does upon this account exceedingly aggregate the divisions amongst some English in Frankfort [over the Anglican ceremonies], who... did even there contend for matters of little moment. This (says he, Epistle 200) was exceeding *intempestive*, or untimely, and exceeding offensive to the Church of Christ, and unbecoming their case: And although he utterly disapproved these ceremonies, as unbecoming the Church of Christ, yet does he (Epistle 206) press moderation on both sides, using these words... 'As I did exhort these who were not of one mind with you to stretch themselves with all possible moderation, so it did displease me that there was upon the other hand by you nothing ceded or remitted.'" *Dying Man's Testament*, pt. 4, [ch. 13](#), pp. 368–69 & [ch. 21](#), p. 426.

"Rule Two. We must have a respect to the ordinance itself, that it be not made contemptible, that the discipline of Christ's house be not rendered obnoxious to reproach and contempt; and as in the first reformation of religion, when men were coming out of popery and were ready to fear and spurn at discipline, and knew not the difference between the popish yoke and Christ's yoke, in that case and in that time there was forbearance on this account." *Collected Sermons of James Durham*, ed. Chris Coldwell (Naphtali Press & Reformation Heritage Books, 2017), vol. 1, 7. 'A Sermon on Ephesians 4:11–12', p. 923.

¹⁷⁶ Ames, responding to an objection to occasional accommodation: "As if occasional accommodation were all one with imposition, or voluntary joining in action for the good that is in it, were always a certain argument of holding that opinion which others do affix unto it." *A Fresh Suit Against Human Ceremonies in God's Worship...* (Amsterdam: Thorp, 1633), ch. 1, section 17, [p. 82](#). See especially Ames's quotes under 'On Material Cooperation with Bishops' at 'On Prelacy & Episcopacy' (RBO).

¹⁷⁷ *The First Prayer-Book of Edward VI compared with the Successive Revisions of the Book of Common Prayer...* (Oxford: Parker, 1877), [pp. 65–65](#).

that a woe hangs on his head if he do not preach it: it is of less importance than for the refusal of it we should let go so necessary a duty."¹⁷⁸

Many Westminster divines expressly agreed.¹⁷⁹ To give more perspective, Burges complained in 1631 that whereas the older, English reforming tradition, as epitomized by the sentiment of Cartwright, considered some of the Anglican ceremonies to be

¹⁷⁸ Cartwright, *Second Reply*, pt. 2, [ch. 8](#), pp. 262–63. Peter Martyr Vermigli: “‘you write that very many will be offended with your wearing the episcopal garments and holy garments as they call them; I do easily believe it: but you shall avoid the fault of scandal if you declare in your sermons that those garments also are displeasing unto you, and withal do with all care endeavor that they may at last be abolished.’ *Epist. Amic. in Angliam*, fol. 1128.” as quoted by Sprint, *Cassander*, “Reformed Practices”, “[practice](#)”, p. 194.

Baxter: “I have heard many pleading for ceremonies say that if the magistrate commanded them and would not otherwise permit them to preach the Gospel, they would preach in a fool’s coat and a fool’s cap with a feather rather than forbear. But I do not think that any of them would justify that ruler that would make such a law...” “But if a governor so mis-determine but a mode or circumstance as will overthrow the substance and ends of the worship, I would not obey, except some greater evil were likely to follow my not obeying at that particular season than the frustrating of the duty itself would come to... An unhandsome vesture I would use in obedience to a lawful governor and to avoid a greater evil: but not so ridiculous a vesture as would set all the people on laughing so as to frustrate the work that we assemble for.” *Five Disputations*, 5th Disputation, [ch. 2](#), pp. 423–24; [ch. 12](#), p. 463.

¹⁷⁹ The presbyterian Westminster divines Marshall, Calamy, Sr., Young, Newcomen and Spurstowe were known by the abbreviation Smectymnuus and approved of Calvin speaking of the Anglican ceremonies as “tolerable fooleries,” which might be begun with, but ought to be removed as religion flourished: Smectymnuus, *A Vindication of the Answer to the Humble Remonstrance...* (London: Rothwell, 1654), §2, pp. 13–14. “While the Smectymnuans accepted that the Prayer Book could remain in use as a guide for church services, they objected to the Laudians’ strict imposition of it on ministers.” Vernon in eds. Griesel & Counsell, *Reformed Identity*, [ch. 5](#). Philip Nye, *A Case of Great & Present Use: Whether we may Lawfully Hear the now Conforming Ministers who are Re-ordained & have Renounced the [Solemn League &] Covenant & Some of them [are] Supposed to be Scandalous in their Lives, Considered & Affirmatively Resolved* (d. 1672; London: Robinson, 1677), [Consideration 2](#), pp. 8–14. See on Baillie above and below.

The nine Westminster divines at Savoy (see [footnote 57](#) above) were part of the group of presbyterian and independent ministers which wrote: “...we are here so far more conformable and peaceable than you [bishops] as that we would even in God’s worship do some things indecent and disorderly rather than disobey... For example, there is much disorder lies in the Common-Prayer-Book, yet we would obey in it as far as the ends of our calling do require. It would be undecent to come without a [preacher’s] band or other handsome raiment into the assembly: yet rather than not worship God at all, we would obey if that were commanded us; we are as confident that surplices and copes are undecent and kneeling at the Lord’s Table is disorderly as you are of the contrary...”

There are some things undecent and disorderly in a small and tolerable degree: and some things in a degree intolerable... When a circumstance is undecent or disorderly, but in a tolerable degree, to an inconvenience, obedience or charity, or edification, may command us to do it and make it not only lawful, but a duty *pro hic et nunc* [for here and now], while the preponderating accident prevails. Christ’s instances go at least as far as this, about the priests in the Temple breaking the Sabbath blamelessly and David’s eating the showbread, which was lawful for none to eat ordinarily but the priests: and the disciples rubbing the ears of corn, ‘I will have mercy and not sacrifice’ is a lesson that He sets us to learn: when two duties come together, to prefer the greater if we would escape sin... It is more orderly to use the better translation of the Scripture than the worse, as the Common-Prayer-Book does [use the worse]; and yet we would have no man cast out for using the worse...” Baxter, *Grand Debate*, “[The Papers](#),” pp. 96–97.

inconvenient, yet “they which have written of later times against them, undertake to prove them simply unlawful, either to be imposed or used...”¹⁸⁰

The Westminster Standards

Confession 1.6

In Westminster’s era there was a train of thought and practice that the Word’s general rules ought to only qualify “some circumstances concerning the worship of God, and government of the Church, common to human actions and societies,”¹⁸¹ (WCF 1.6) but not substantially alter ordinances of Church government or worship. Given a sufficiently limited definition of “some circumstances,” this makes divine positive ordinances unalterable. This view exclusively-allowed is contrary to, not only Scripture,¹⁸² but the original historic intent of Westminster, in that: (1) the Confession’s language allows for other views, (2) some Westminster divines and others held that Church government and worship ordinances may be substantially altered in necessity, and (3) members of Westminster holding other views could have affirmed and voted for the relevant propositions of Westminster’s Confession and Catechisms.

(1) WCF 1.6 is an example of “deceptive clarity”.¹⁸³ Without knowing the wider historical, theological background of the era, the relevant clause appears quite precise and confining:

“...there are some circumstances concerning the worship of God, and government of the Church, common to human actions and societies, which are to be ordered by the light of

¹⁸⁰ Burges, *Answer Rejoined*, p. 4. Burges lists as such writers: Parker, Bradshaw, Calderwood, Ames and others.

¹⁸¹ Ames, Gillespie and Rutherford were such advocates.

¹⁸² Besides what is said above and below, see the ‘Intro’ at ‘On the Administration of the Sacraments in Extra-Ordinary Circumstances’ (RBO).

¹⁸³ This phrase has been popularized by Lee Gatiss: “Gerald Cragg, commenting on this period in the development of Reformed theology, boldly asserts that ‘within the dominant theological school there were innumerable shades of opinion, and the various sects could fight bitterly enough among themselves... The unanimity was deceptive because it was superficial.’ Yet the deceptive clarity of the Westminster Confession appears to my mind to be anything but superficial. It is, rather, careful and studious.” “[A Deceptive Clarity? Particular Redemption in the Westminster Standards](#)” *Reformed Theological Review*, vol. 69, no. 3 (Dec. 2010), pp. 195–96.

nature and Christian prudence, according to the general rules of the Word, which are always to be observed.”

Yet there is a growing awareness amongst scholars that assemblies and confessions of Westminster’s era not only often had consensus contexts and processes, but even regularly utilized “ambiguity for the sake of unity”.¹⁸⁴ It is sometimes claimed the “some circumstances” in the proposition must be narrowly defined along the lines of the very limited list Rutherford (a Westminster divine and prominent non-conformist) delineates,¹⁸⁵ as would alter in no way any regulated aspect of divine, positive ordinances. Yet the narrowness of this view of the confessional clause is untenable for at least seven footnoted reasons,¹⁸⁶ not the least of which being that Westminster never itself

¹⁸⁴ David H. Wenkel, “The Doctrine of the Extent of the Atonement among the Early English Particular Baptists” *Harvard Theological Review*, 112:3 (2019), p. 373. Wenkel: “Such careful ambiguity reflects the pattern of Reformed confessionalism in the seventeenth century.” “Extent of the Atonement,” abstract, p. 358.

¹⁸⁵ Rutherford: “things circumstantial, as time, place, etc.... as are common and unseparable concomitants of both civil, natural, and religious or sacred actions performed by men... such as I take to be the seven individual proprieties of every man: *forma, figura, locus, tempus, stirps, patria, nomen* [form, figure, place, time, lineage, country, name]...” *Divine Right, Introduction*, pp. 2–3. Note Rutherford says “such as I take to be,” he not citing anyone else for his exact viewpoint.

Wenkel: “When the confessions are interpreted in light of prominent individuals, then the communal voice of these documents is lost. The doctrines of both individuals and the church confessions constitute different voices and each must be heard on its own terms without drowning out the other. When the voices of both the pastors and the confessions are heard, there are elements of tension that cannot be missed.” “Extent of the Atonement,” p. 361.

¹⁸⁶ (1) the Confession nowhere defines “circumstances” as such, or at all, leaving the Westminster divines’ voting for it up to themselves in affirming the bare term in whatever way they thought appropriate.

(2) One of the proof-texts for this confessional sentence is [1 Cor. 11:13–14](#), about women praying covered, which positive, particular, social custom of that time would be more than a circumstance of time, place, etc. in some people’s estimation.

(3) Church history and the reformed tradition before Westminster often used “circumstances” broadly, as is in part documented at ‘[On Circumstances](#)’ (RBO). John Yates, a puritan minded Anglican clergyman, in 1622 juxtaposed “circumstances” with “the elements of worship” and the “substance” of worship. Hence, whatever was not of the substance of worship, was a circumstance, including for him “the ornaments... of worship,” a term and concept popularized by Calvin, under which the Anglican ceremonies were often placed: Yates, *A Model of Divinity, Catechistically Composed...* (London, 1622), bk. 2, ch. 1, p. 309; Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, tr. Henry Beveridge (Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1846), bk. 4, ch. 10, §29, pp. 221–22: “ut sit idoneum ad pietatem exercitium, vel saltem quod ad ornatum faciet actioni congruentem; neque id ipsum sine fructu...” Calvin, *Opera*, vol. II in *Corpus Reformatorum*, vol. XXX, ed. Baum, Cunitz & Reuss (Brunswick: Schwetschke, 1864), col. 888. Juxtaposing circumstances with the substance of worship was not only common in that era (especially amongst those who conformed), but followed upon Aquinas’s teaching: “Circumstances are outside an action, inasmuch as they are not part of its essence; but they are in an action as accidents thereof. Thus, too, accidents in natural substances are outside the essence.” *Summa*, I of II, q. 18, art. 3, reply to obj. 1.

defines “circumstances” (leaving every voting member to their own interpretation and viewpoint) and the affirmation of the clause does not disallow other circumstances or

(4) Westminster’s statement is an affirmation that there are some such circumstances, yet the statement does not exclude that other things may be ordered by nature’s light, Christian prudence and the general rules of the Word “concerning the worship of God, and government of the Church,” if such also be in align with [WCF 21.1](#). Burges: “they which tell us that all which the Church may do touching rites and ceremonies is but the application of circumstances which are in nature civil and serve to comeliness, as well in civil as sacred actions, adding that the Church may not ordain any one or other ceremony which shall be merely ecclesiastical, do manifest a spirit which lusts after contradiction. For if the Church ordain or observe at all any ceremonies in religious affairs, the same must be in that use, sacred or merely ecclesiastical, though in other use civil. And yet it is this they say were true, the ceremonies in question might stand, seeing there has been, may be, and is a civil use also of a linen garment, a cross for a shop sign, and kneeling to honor a king or a father.” *Answer Rejoined*, p. 37. Note that Burges’s affirmation might not only be consistent with [WCF 1.6](#), in addition to what it says, but that it may be understood, as it likely was, within what [WCF 1.6](#) says. On the note of what consists in addition to [WCF 1.6](#), Baxter later said, likely representing a tradition before him (emphasis added): “God’s Word is the rule of all acceptable religious worship (though but a general rule in many modes and circumstances)...” *The Protestant Religion Truly Stated & Justified* (London: Salusbury, 1692), [point 28](#), p. 111.

(5) Defenders of some of the Anglican ceremonies, or at least of tolerating them, are on record as affirming the expressions and general phrasing of [WCF 1.6](#) before the Confession was produced, such as the Anglican bishop Thomas Morton, [A Defence of the Innocency of the Three Ceremonies of the Church of England](#) (London: Barret, 1618), 6, 21, 75, and the Scottish bishop David Lindsay: [A True Narration of All the Passages of the Proceedings in the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, holden at Perth...](#) (London: Stansby, 1621), “[To the Reverend & Godly Brethren](#)” & pp. 16–17, 23, 28, 33–34, 65, 106. These writers, quoting Calvin, were not alone but it is clear they were writing from and summarizing a tradition of thought.

(6) It is likely numerous or many of the Westminster divines performed and justified some of the Anglican ceremonies under the categories of [WCF 1.6](#). Burges (who wrote for conformity under pain of deposition in 1631): “That the difference which some would make betwixt circumstances and ceremonies, while they admit unto the Church’s power the determination of some circumstances, but not of any ceremonies in the service of God, may hereby appear to be a mere nicety or fiction. For that all circumstances (I mean extrinsical) which incur not the substance of the action, when they are once designed or observed purposely in reference to such a matter of whose substance they are not, they are then ceremonies as well as circumstances of that matter or action to which they so refer.” *Answer Rejoined*, p. 33.

[WLC 108–109](#) on the duties and prohibitions of the Second Commandment, in its detailed lists, does not explicitly forbid crosses, vestments, “human significant ceremonies,” even mystical ceremonies, or any of the Anglican ceremonies at all. Defenders of the ceremonies, or their toleration, could affirm and vote for every detailed, general principle in those catechism answers, such as the episcopal Westminster divine, Daniel Featley: “What are the duties of godly pastors?... 6. To conform themselves to the holy and decent orders of the Church, performing all rites and ceremonies enjoined by it, as reading the Liturgy, marrying, burying, etc.” *Ancilla pietatis: or the Hand-maid to Private Devotion* (London: Bourne, 1626), [§49](#), p. 51.

The Westminster divine George Morley, later a bishop, was for keeping the Anglican “ceremonials,” and yet recognized the many abuses in the Anglican observances that needed reforming: [The Bishop of Worcester's Letter to a Friend for Vindication of Himself from Mr. Baxter's Calumny](#) (London: Norton, 1662), p. 18; *idem*, [A Modest Advertisement concerning the Present Controversy about Church-Government](#) (London: Bostock, 1641), pp. 14, 19.

(7) Gillespie himself says the “circumstances, which are left to the determination of the Church” are “almost infinite”: *Dispute*, pt. 3, [ch. 7](#), p. 114.

things from being “ordered” in Church government and worship “by the light of nature and Christian prudence, according to the general rules of the Word”.

Further, the confessional phrase, “which are always to be observed,” referring back to “the general rules of the Word,” and even, “the light of nature and Christian prudence,” due to the comma,¹⁸⁷ can be read independently of the previous “some circumstances,” not being necessarily tied thereto. That is, worship and government ought always, and in all ways, to be governed by nature’s light, Christian prudence and the Word’s general rules, not only under the limitation of “some circumstances,” but even with respect to doing all things (1 Cor. 10:31), as numerous divines in that era taught.¹⁸⁸ If the Word’s general rules are prerequisites to all human actions as such, as they are,¹⁸⁹ then they are prerequisites to, modify and must modify all Church government and worship actions.¹⁹⁰ Needless to say, the Word’s general rules are legitimately capable of different syntheses, especially in different circumstances.

¹⁸⁷ The comma is in early editions of the Confession: B.B. Warfield’s third edition (1648), published in *The Westminster Standards: an Original Facsimile* (Auburn, NJ: Old Paths Publications, 1997), p. 5; S.W. Carruthers, *The Westminster Confession of Faith, being an Account...* (Manchester: Aikman, 1937), p. 92.

¹⁸⁸ e.g. Cartwright: “For the fourth rule, which is that they be done to the glory of God, he will acknowledge that to be no rule to direct ceremonies by because that is a rule to guide all actions whatsoever, which is a very strange argument, that because that is a rule to guide all actions: therefore that is no rule to direct the churches.” *Second Reply, “What authority the Church has in making off orders,”* p. 64. Commentaries from the era can be consulted on 1 Cor. 10:31, “Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God,” at ‘*New Testament Commentaries*’ (RBO).

¹⁸⁹ Cartwright, *A Reply to an Answer made of M. Doctor Whitgift Against the Admonition to the Parliament* ([Hempstead] 1573), p. 27.

¹⁹⁰ In a foundational text, Calvin had delivered the principle of “the general rules which He has given” governing the “external discipline and ceremonies” of the Church: *Institutes*, bk. 4, ch. 10, §30, p. 223.

Sprint: “The circumstantial or ceremonials determined by her, out of the general rules of the Word, she [the Church] proposes...” *Cassander Anglicanus*, p. 81.

Ames said those who did not hold to using the impure Anglican ceremonies in case of deprivation were of “Dr. Morton’s way, who avouches the said ceremonies to be agreeable unto the rules of God’s Word...” *A Reply to Dr. Morton’s General Defence of Three Nocent Ceremonies...* ([Amsterdam: Thorp.] 1622), Preface.

Ball: “That there was no prescribed liturgy particularly ordained and determined of God is freely confessed: but that there was none in use is not proved by the silence of the Scripture. For the scripture was given to be the perfect rule of faith and manners, but sets not down particular customs or observations, according to the general rules of religion.” “We freely confess it [the Anglican Liturgy] to be no ordinance of Christ by special institution, nor part of his worship: It suffices that it is allowable in the worship, and consonant to the general rules given in scripture, but not of absolute necessity.” *A Friendly Trial of the Grounds tending to Separation...* ([Cambridge:] Daniel, 1640), ch. 7, pp. 107, 111.

Rutherford reveals how persons in his day differed from him; when he delineates his view, he only names himself as holding to it: “Any positives not warranted by some special word of God shall be additions to the Word of God: But these are expressly forbidden, Dt. 4:2; 12:32; Prov. 30:6; Rev. 22:18–19.

Confession 21.1

The breadth here recognized in WCF 1.6 consists with the other major passage in the Confession regarding worship, WCF 21.1:

“...the acceptable way of worshipping the true God is instituted by himself, and so limited to his own revealed will, that he may not be worshipped according to the imaginations and devices of men... or any other way not prescribed in the Holy Scripture.”

Some take “prescribed” here to refer to worship ordinances, that “the acceptable way of worshipping” is “limited” to the ordinances “prescribed in Holy Scripture”. Yet the language of the Word’s general rules being “prescribed” and “prescribing” things

To this Formalists [Anglicans, etc.] answer: 1. They have a general commandment of God, though not a special.” “9. There is a general warrant in Scripture for worship and moral actions, twofold: either when the major proposition is only in Scripture, and the assumption [minor premise] is the will of men, or when both the proposition and assumption are warranted by Scripture: the former warrant I think not sufficient, and therefore the latter is necessary to prove the thing lawful.” *Divine Right*, Introduction, §4, pp. 51, 102.

Andrewes Lancelot: “the continual practice of the Christian Church has been to prescribe and order several things in God’s worship which no peaceable and holy men ever found fault with, provided that they were agreeable to those general rules of moral worship required by God, and no ways repugnant to those rites by Him appointed, but rather subservient to them... so if the Church prescribe anything, she ought to look to those general rules given by God that it may be the more acceptable to Him when there is nothing in particular determined in the Word.” *The Pattern of Catechistical Doctrine at Large...* (London: Norton, 1650), pp. 194–96.

The bishops at the [Savoy Conference](#) (1661), justified the Anglican responsive readings according to general rules, including for edification and implicitly by nature’s light and Christian prudence: Baxter, *Grand Debate*, “[Papers](#),” p. 66.

William Sherlock: “every Church has authority to prescribe its own rites and ceremonies of worship in conformity to the general rules of the Gospel.” *A Letter to Anonymous in Answer to his Three Letters to Dr. Sherlock about Church-Communion...* (London: Gardiner, 1683), p. 52.

Thomas Long, a conformist: “For if we should suppose that the rites and ceremonies were as expressly set down in the Gospel to be used or forborne in the public worship of God, as the rites and circumstances concerning sacrifices were in the ceremonial law: yet as the sacrifices themselves, much more the modes of preparing and offering them, might be used or omitted for the performance of moral duties, so doubtless, if things of an external, ceremonial nature had been commanded or forbidden in express terms, they might yet be observed or omitted as the substantial service of God and obedience to his greater commands, for charity and peace, might be best performed.” *The Character of a Separatist, or Sensuality the Ground of Separation* (London: Kettily, 1677), [Preface concerning the Ceremonies of the Church](#).

That the Word’s general rules, which are in a manner prescribed, govern all Church government and worship actions, is in harmony with WCF 21.1, which says, “He may not be worshipped... any other way not prescribed in the Holy Scripture,” besides having been expounded in the sections above, “[On Matthew 12:1–12: The Sabbath, Jesus & David](#)” and “[The General Rules of the Word](#)”, will be further expounded immediately below in the section “[Confession 21.1](#)”.

“commanded” has been preceded in that era by several theological writers.¹⁹¹ Hence to use divine worship ordinances as qualified by the prescribed general rules of the Word is also a view allowed by Westminster. Writers in the era have also been documented as speaking of nature’s light and law as being part of God’s “revealed will” and that nature’s light and law have been “instituted” and “prescribed” of God, and that in “Holy Scripture”.¹⁹² All such proponents could affirm WCF 21.1.

(2) The Westminster Assembly held that Church government may be substantially (and not simply circumstantially) altered in necessity, so far as they counselled the English Parliament to set up presbyterian government in London, where it was conceded and tolerated that the Parliament would reserve to itself power to determine appeals from the national ecclesiastical assembly.¹⁹³ Westminster divines that ministered in the subsequent presbyterian, London Provincial Assembly included Walker,¹⁹⁴ Gouge, Seaman, Calamy, Spurstowe, Tuckney, Proffet, Gataker, Ashe and Case.¹⁹⁵ As to the alteration of divine, worship ordinances, the dominant reformed position in that era (including as testified to by the Westminster divines John Ley and Richard Vines), contra the Lutherans, was that the sacraments could be substantially altered in necessity.¹⁹⁶

(3) Given the above it is clear members of Westminster (who were mostly Anglicans)¹⁹⁷ holding diverse views could have affirmed and voted for the relevant

¹⁹¹ Greenwood: “Some things there are... commanded by general doctrine, as baptism of infants. But whatsoever is commanded either in particular or necessary collections from general rules are of necessity to be obeyed as the commandments of God...” ([Amsterdam,] 1590 / 1603), [arg. 4–6](#), p. 30. Tombes: “...has left such things (though needful to the well performing of the worship He has determined) under general rules prescribed in holy Scripture...” *Theodulia* (London: Cotes, 1667), [§20](#), p. 39. Thomas Hotchkis: “The like circumstances pertaining to this and other parts of God’s worship, as undetermined by the Word of God... whereunto the Word of God is only a general rule, prescribing only indefinite-wise...” *Reformation or Ruin...* (London: Parkhurst, 1675), [§39](#), pp. 210–11. John Corbet: “...keeping within the general rules prescribed in God’s Word...” *The Point of Church-Unity & Schism Discussed by a Nonconformist* (London: Parkhurst, 1679), [ch. 2](#), p. 17.

¹⁹² Fentiman, “A Commentary on Westminster Confession of Faith 21.1 on Worship & its Theological Context” at ‘Natural vs. Instituted Worship’ (RBO).

¹⁹³ “Certain Considerations and Cautions agreed upon by the Ministers of London and Westminster... June 19, 1646, according to which they resolved to put the Presbyterian Government in Execution, upon the Ordinance of Parliament...” in Vilant, *Review & Examination*, pp. 26–29. “August 1648: An Ordinance for The Form of Church Government to be used in the Church of England and Ireland, agreed upon by the Lords and Commons assembled in Parliament, after Advice, had with the Assembly of Divines” in *Acts & Ordinances of the Interregnum, 1642–1660*, ed. C.H. Firth & R.S. Rait (London, 1911).

¹⁹⁴ Reid, *Memoirs*, p. 204.

¹⁹⁵ Neal, *History of the Puritans*, 2.433, 437; Vernon, *London Presbyterians & the British Revolutions, 1638–64* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2021), pp. 184–85, 212, 243.

¹⁹⁶ See ‘On the Administration of the Sacraments in Extra-Ordinary Circumstances’ (RBO).

¹⁹⁷ See footnote 25.

propositions of the Confession and Catechisms (they not holding ceremonies to be “according to the imaginations and devices of men”)¹⁹⁸ and materially submitted to Westminster’s [Directory for the Public Worship of God](#) and [Form of Presbyterian Church-Government](#) (though they may not think them ideal).¹⁹⁹ In fact, though Westminster be more detailed, it is possible to affirm both the official Anglican teaching on worship in her [39 Articles](#) (Articles 20 & 34 on the authority and traditions of the Church) and the relevant sections of Westminster, as there is nothing necessarily contradictory between them.²⁰⁰ That is, the original, historic intent of the Westminster Confession (WCF) and Catechisms did not exclude mainline Anglican worship.

¹⁹⁸ Morton: “Zanchius has told you that, ‘That place concerning will-worship, condemned by the apostle, Col. 2:27, did point at certain hypocrites of those times who did obtrude upon Christians traditions of their own devising, in pretense that they proceeded from God.’” “What can be more plain... that when those divines speak against worship of God devised by man, they use the word in a strict acception and sense, as signifying the proper worship of God, being therefore properly divine, because ordained of God? And so we confess unto you that our ceremonies are no part of God’s worship.” *Defence of the Three Ceremonies*, ch. 2, pp. 30 & 36. On the establishment Anglicans being able to vote for the propositions of the Confession and Catechisms, see [footnote 185](#).

¹⁹⁹ See [Coleman’s quote](#) in footnote 256. That these two documents were constructed of many concessions and left out numerous things many of different views held to be ideal, see ‘[The Westminster Directory for the Public Worship of God: Commentaries on, Discussions of & Historical Documents Related Unto](#)’ (RBO) and Wayne Spear, *Covenanted Uniformity in Religion: The Influence of the Scottish Commissioners upon the Ecclesiology of the Westminster Assembly* (Reformation Heritage Books, 2013).

²⁰⁰ Article 20: “The Church hath power to decree rites or ceremonies, and authority in controversies of faith: And yet it is not lawful for the Church to ordain any thing that is contrary to God’s Word written...” “Rites” and “ceremonies” were often defined by Anglicans to be merely circumstantial and not of the substance of worship. Though that be debated by non-conformists, yet non-conformists could just as well affirm Article 20 with respect to their own worship in their own (allowable) sense. Those holding that everything religiously significant not warranted by Scripture for worship is prohibited, can affirm Article 20, as that article says nothing against it. For more on how establishment Anglicans could affirm WCF 1.6, 21.1 and the [WLC](#) on the Second Commandment, see [footnote 185](#).

Article 34: “It is not necessary that traditions and ceremonies be in all places one, or utterly like, for at all times they have been diverse, and may be changed according to the diversity of countries, times, and men’s manners, so that nothing be ordained against God’s Word. Whosoever through his private judgement, willingly and purposely doeth openly break the traditions and ceremonies of the Church, which be not repugnant to the Word of God, and be ordained and approved by common authority, ought to be rebuked openly (that other may fear to do the like) as he that offendeth against the common order of the Church, and hurteth the authority of the magistrate, and woundeth the consciences of the weak brethren. Every particular or national Church, hath authority to ordain, change, and abolish ceremonies or rites of the Church, ordained only by man’s authority, so that all things be done to edifying.”

As to the phrases “so that nothing be ordained against God’s Word” and “which be not repugnant to the Word of God,” which are often interpreted as meaning that things not forbidden by Scripture may be so used in worship, yet those who hold that all things in worship not warranted by Scripture are therein forbidden, can equally affirm these clauses and the articles in their understanding. This was part of the original context of the English Reformation, per Baxter, *Nonconformists’ Plea for Peace*, §7, ‘[Some Matters of Fact Preparatory...](#)’, p. 120.

Larger Catechism: 2nd Commandment, Question 108

It has already been shown in a footnote how with respect to ceremonies an establishment Anglican could affirm everything [Westminster Larger Catechism](#) (WLC) on the Second Commandment (Questions 108–9) affirms,²⁰¹ yet it remains to be clarified how the detailed catechetical answers of these questions consist with partial conformity, they being sometimes employed against it. Answer 108 says:

“The duties required in the second commandment are, the... keeping pure and entire, all such religious worship and ordinances as God hath instituted in his word... church government and discipline...

as also the disapproving, detesting, opposing all false worship; and, according to each one’s place and calling, removing it, and all monuments of idolatry.”

Regarding keeping pure and entire all religious worship instituted in the Word, it is true this “is always our duty ([Dt. 4:8–9](#)),” in the words of [WLC](#) 99.5, “yet every particular duty is not to be done at all times. ([Mt. 12:7](#))” The proof-text cited reads, “I will have mercy and not sacrifice.” The harmony of these things the majority of the Westminster divines well-exemplified for decades leading up to Westminster in (at least) partially conforming to the “snare” of the Liturgy of the Church of England, their Erastian, episcopal government and their greatly deficient Church discipline.

While “disapproving, detesting, opposing all false worship” consists with partial-conformity, it ought to be noted the proof-texts for “false worship,” [Acts 17:16–17](#) and [Ps. 16:4](#), only reference paganism, idolatry and the Jewish religion, not Christian errors. “False worship” was an ambiguous phrase, persons putting into it what they pleased,²⁰² yet the degree of falsity, so as to be appropriately labeled such, needed not refer in the

²⁰¹ See [footnote 185](#), section (6).

²⁰² The Separatists before Westminster liberally labelled many aspects of the Anglican Liturgy, and the whole of it, as “false worship”. The partial-conformists retorted this was an inappropriate term for such. Bernard: “But grant there were some corruptions added which men should put merit and holiness in to worship God by... is therefore all the worship false? Is good meat mixed with ill meat, false meat? or good, corrupted? This false distinction of true and false against us will not stand.” *Christian Advertisements*, ‘[The errors of the Separatists](#)’, pp. 146–47. See also the quotes by Greenham, Gifford, Ball, Tombes and Baxter at ‘[On Impurities in Worship](#)’ (RBO).

end to anything more than what the proof-texts evidence, as Westminster divines of a wide range of views could, and did, affirm and vote for that language.

As to removing false worship, our puritan authors will profoundly expound the phrase, “according to each one’s place and calling”. With regard to “removing... monuments of idolatry,” establishment Anglicans had long affirmed and practiced this, interpreting the phrase as referring (only) to such Romanist monuments and not to the Anglican ceremonies, the latter being held to be not inherently unlawful.²⁰³

Question 109

Answer 109 teaches:

“The sins forbidden in the second commandment are, all devising, counselling, commanding, using, and any wise approving, any religious worship not instituted by God himself; tolerating a false religion...

all superstitious devices, corrupting the worship of God, adding to it, or taking from it, whether invented and taken up of ourselves, or received by tradition from others, though under the title of antiquity, custom, devotion, good intent, or any other pretence whatsoever... all neglect, contempt, hindering, and opposing the worship and ordinances which God hath appointed.”

Regarding what must necessarily count as “the worship and ordinances which God hath appointed,” which we are not to hinder or oppose, Q. 108 had named, “particularly prayer... the reading, preaching, and hearing of the Word,” etc. (cf. WCF 21.3–5) Note how basic and fundamental these “parts” (WCF 21.5) of worship are: things that establishment Anglicans could easily affirm, and yet not believe that their circumstantial (as they thought) modifying of them by the Anglican Liturgy (or in other ways), or their ceremonies, hindered or opposed God’s ordinances (but rather furthered them),

²⁰³ So bishop [Richard Cox](#) (c. 1500–1581), who opposed John Knox at Frankfurt regarding the Anglican Liturgy, was a zealous and firm remover of Romanist monuments of superstition and idolatry: [Wenig, “Reformation during the Episcopate of Richard Cox,”](#) pp. 167 & 170. On monuments of idolatry generally, see ‘[On Monuments & Badges of Idolatry](#)’ (RBO).

especially when they thought the king and Church had God's instituted authority for instituting such.²⁰⁴

Partial-conformists at the assembly who thought such modifications of those parts of the worship service were against the Scriptural rule, yet had at least three ways of legitimately understanding and voting for the ambiguous language and terms in Q. 109:

(1) If they thought the Anglican ceremonies were merely inconvenient and/or snares, and nothing more, yet many likely held Burges's understanding that the ceremonies "in themselves are no acts or parts of divine worship..."²⁰⁵

(2) If others did put a religious or worshipful significance or end in the inconvenient, material actions Westminster divines conformed to, yet they did not, and hence (in their context) the actions were not to them a "using" of "any religious worship," just as the stronger Christians in [Rom. 14](#) were not "using... any religious worship" in

²⁰⁴ Morton: "The authority which the Church does challenge, [f]or appointing circumstantial and accidental parts of God's worship, is from the liberty which she has granted unto her in magna Charta, to wit, the book of holy Scriptures, which expressly has given unto her authority to constitute such rites, as belong to decency, order, and edification..." *Defence of the Three Ceremonies*, ch. 2, p. 35. Baxter, albeit a non-conformist: "The word 'worship,' as I said before, is equivocal, as signifying only the things made necessary to the honoring of God directly by divine command, or the subordinate acts, modes, circumstances left to human choice."

"That which God has commanded is no false worship: But God has commanded the churches to determine undetermined modes and circumstances needful *in genere*, so as all may be done to edification, decently and in order, and not causelessly to cross the customs of the Churches of God, and to obey those that are over them in the Lord."

"This [Anglican] worship contains: 1. In general: praying, praising, preaching. Is this none of God's command?... 1. The foresaid parts are imposed by God Himself. 2. The lawful modes imposed by men depend not on their authority alone, but on God's, who authorizes rulers to do it: For he has said, "Let all be done to edification," [1 Cor. 14:26] "in order;" [1 Cor. 14:40] "Obey them that have the rule." [Heb. 13:7] They that obey a pastor for time, place, utensils, translations, psalms, etc. or that obey the king depend not herein on man alone." *On Worship & Catholicity* (1684; RBO, 2024), pp. 38, 42 & 63–64.

²⁰⁵ Burges, *Answer Rejoined*, 126. He elsewhere says of the surplice: "I understand it not... as a thing necessary to the worship of God, or any part thereof; neither take I it to be enjoined as any sacramentally-significant sign, but only for order and uniformity's sake." He speaks of the ceremonies as "things, in which they do not at all place any worship of God properly so called." *Answer Rejoined*, pp. 24 & 133. Morton, published by civil authority: "What can be more plain... that when those divines speak against worship of God devised by man, they use the word in a strict acception and sense, as signifying the proper worship of God, being therefore properly divine, because ordained of God? And so we confess unto you that our ceremonies are no part of God's worship." *Defence of the Three Ceremonies*, ch. 2, p. 36. Chaderton had written in the 1590's: "Now we know that the Church professes that these ceremonies are neither propounded nor to be used to serve God with all or to be any parcels of his worship. (For if they were they should be detestable abominations), and therefore they are not, neither can be, forbidden in the Second Commandment." Lake, *Moderate Puritans*, p. 245.

conforming to the weaker consuming only vegetables and non-wine drinks out of erroneous, religious principle.²⁰⁶

(3) Lists are often riddled with ambiguity in the Westminster standards (for the purpose of increasing outward unity in affirmation).²⁰⁷ It may be natural to read the “and”s in Q. 109 as forbidding each and every part of that list, in every way (if the “all” at the beginning applies to everything following), yet this is not grammatically necessary. The full catechism answer includes numerous “and”s and “or”s. Why? “Or” more clearly makes each part forbidden in such a list; “and” might conjoin the points together so only the whole taken together is forbidden.

To give an example in Q. 109 itself: “the making of any representation of feigned deities, and all worship of them, or service belonging to them” is forbidden. But did the Westminster divines together teach that Scripture forbids “any representation of feigned deities... or service belonging to them” for teaching or historical purposes? Such is not inherently wrong for a good end and may have a degree of necessity to it. Certainly the most extreme puritans were for the demolishing of all representations, even in museums, but the more moderate,²⁰⁸ understanding the catechetical clauses conjoined together by “and” as a whole, could have thought “the making of any representation of feigned deities” was permissible, but not when conjoined with the clause “and all worship of them”.²⁰⁹

Likewise it is not grammatically necessary for the “all” at the beginning of the list to apply to every item following, and “using, and any wise approving, any religious worship not instituted by God himself” can be taken together as forbidden, as partial-

²⁰⁶ This is because the kind of an action is determined by its end. Gillespie: “Actions take their species or kind from the object and the end, when other circumstances hinder not...” *Dispute*, pt. 3, ch. 8, p. 152. Rutherford, *Divine Right*, [Intro](#), pp. 85–56, 88–89 & [ch. 1](#), p. 150. It is true acute circumstances could still make an action sinful that does not have a formally sinful end, such as if Daniel’s three friends bowed down before the idol, intending something else. See Aquinas, *Summa*, I of II, q. 18, art. 3. ‘[Whether man’s action may be good or evil from a circumstance?](#)’ [Yes] and art. 10, ‘[Whether a circumstance may place a moral action in the species of good or evil?](#)’ [Yes].

²⁰⁷ For examples, see Fentiman, ‘[Intro & Westminster Only Necessarily Prohibits Needless Worldly Recreations on the Lord’s Day](#)’ at ‘[Recreation on the Lord’s Day](#)’ (RBO).

²⁰⁸ I have seen these things in the literature, though do not have the references on hand.

²⁰⁹ Note that the following, “or service belonging to them,” does not change the force of this, as the forbidding of P and (Q or R) is equivalent to forbidding (P and Q) or (P and R).

conformists affirm, they not in any wise approving any religious worship not instituted by God himself.²¹⁰

With respect to the Second Commandment forbidding “tolerating a false religion,” again, “false religion” is here undefined and capable of different senses.²¹¹ While in the abstract the phrase could refer to every error in religion, however small or mistaking²¹² (contra [Rom. 14](#)),²¹³ there were plenty of divines in the 1640’s, not to mention Westminster divines themselves,²¹⁴ who were comfortable with some measure of political toleration for some erring Christian professions, and yet thought every non-Christian religion ought not to be so tolerated.²¹⁵

As to the rest of Q. 109, no doubt the Second Commandment forbids superstitious devices, but the erroneous practices of the weak in [Rom. 14](#) were not “devices,” nor necessarily “superstitious,” nor would the stronger have consumed only vegetables and non-wine drinks with superstition. Regarding “corrupting the worship of God,” to give only two considerations:

²¹⁰ Peter Marshall and John Morgan’s article on conformity and the English, Elizabethan Church settlement disputes “any suggestion that apparent acquiescence signaled pervasive ‘acceptance’ of the alteration in religion among the clergy.” “[Clerical Conformity & the Elizabethan Settlement Revisited](#)” in *The Historical Journal*, vol. 59, no. 1 (March 2016), abstract.

²¹¹ John Davenant: “...but they who, retaining all fundamentals of faith and God’s worship, differ from others and err in some consequences or doctrines of less moment, profess no new or other religion, but are convicted not as yet to have attained in that one only religion to perfect knowledge.” *An Exhortation to Brotherly Communion betwixt the Protestant Churches...* (London: R.B., 1641), [ch. 12](#), p. 165.

²¹² The later, Scottish, John Brown of Haddington (d. 1787): “There is nothing in the matter of these [Scottish, national] covenants, which does not enter into the faith and practice of true religion. They... renounced, and promised... whatever else should, by the Word of God, be found contrary to said doctrine, worship, discipline, and government, and holy practice.” *The Absurdity & Perfidy of All Authoritative Toleration of Gross Heresy, Blasphemy, Idolatry, Popery, in Britain...* (Glasgow: Bryce, 1780), [p. 113](#).

²¹³ While the proof-texts for Q. #109 indicate the phrase could refer to corruptions in the Christian religion, yet the corruptions indicated therein ([Dt. 13:6-12](#); [Zech. 13:2,3](#); [Rev. 2:2, 14, 15, 20](#); [17:12, 16, 17](#)) were quite severe.

²¹⁴ The Independents at the assembly generally allowed for a broader political toleration of public Christian teachings in secondary and tertiary points, while the Scottish presbyterians more commonly allowed for less toleration, though some. See Mitchell, *Westminster Assembly*, Lecture 6, [pp. 198-211](#) and Fentiman, *Circa Sacra*, pp. 65, 69, 83, 87-88, 97-98, 100-101. See many more discussions in that era at ‘[On Toleration & Pretended Liberty of Conscience](#)’ (RBO).

²¹⁵ To give a later example regarding toleration of error in Christian worship: John Owen advocating whole-sale separation from Anglican worship argued, “As we must not affect their drink-offerings of blood, so we must not take up their names in our lips ([Ps. 16:4](#)). Have no communion with them.” Baxter rightly retorted: “[Ps. 16:4](#) is too sadly abused, which speaks only of sacrificing to and worshipping false gods [and not of the worship of the true God].” Baxter, [On Worship & Catholicity](#), pp. 24-25.

(1) For all the problems Westminster attributed to the Liturgy in the [Preface](#) to her Directory for the Public Worship of God, they did not accuse it of “corrupting the worship of God,” and hence would not consider things of a like nature today to corrupt God’s worship.

(2) [Zachary Crofton](#) (1626–1672, a partially conforming, covenanting presbyterian) evidenced a significant trajectory of English thought in distinguishing that:

“Corruptions extrinsic and circumstantial are ordinances superadded unto, and so concomitant with, or conversant about God’s ordinances; but enter not into, nor do vitiate their subject: the which [divine ordinances] (these [corruptions] notwithstanding) do exist in matter, and essential form, perfect and entire, capable of due operation in their own course and nature...”²¹⁶

If such “corruptions extrinsic and circumstantial” may be materially performed in some circumstances (which partial conformists have disagreed about), they need not be a “corrupting [of] the worship of God,” nor a formal “adding to it,” in the language of the catechism. Nor is omission of a duty under necessity a “taking from” God’s worship.²¹⁷

To finish off commenting on Q. 109, certainly partial conformity ought not to be done under a “pretence,” nor does it neglect, hinder, or oppose “the worship and ordinances which God hath appointed,” but rather fulfills them so far as they may be had.

Seeing as partial conformity is consistent with the Westminster standards, we turn to applications in God’s worship. Albeit principles of partial conformity apply broadly to innumerable things, two select examples will be theologically and ethically analyzed while objections are solved. Afterwards the historical narrative we left off will be taken up again and will highlight working towards the same goal.

²¹⁶ Zachary Crofton, [Reformation, Not Separation, or, Mr. Crofton’s Plea for Communion with the Church...](#) ([London:] 1662), p. 21. Much material with distinctions the same as or very similar to Crofton’s may be found at ‘[On Impurities in Worship](#)’ (RBO).

²¹⁷ See ‘[That Persons or Whole Churches Omitting Parts of Worship \(whether Personal, Family or Public\) due to Necessary Factors \(including Providential & for Reformation\) may be Acceptable to God](#)’ at ‘[On Impurities in Worship](#)’ (RBO).

Applications

For concrete examples take: 1. Unison prayers, and 2. Responsive readings. Gillespie called these things “rites,”²¹⁸ which term he often used synonymously with “ceremonies”. There is little doubt Gillespie would not have done either practice²¹⁹ and Sprint did both in the Anglican liturgy.

1. Unison Prayers

Apart from extraordinary exclamations (e.g. [1 Chron. 16:36 MEV](#)) and the book of Revelation,²²⁰ no verbal, unison prayers are preceded in the historical Church’s worship in Scripture. Rather, one person is always found praying on behalf of all ([1 Sam. 7:5](#); [1 Kn. 8:22–23](#); [1 Chron. 29:10–11](#); [2 Chron. 20:5–6](#); [Mt. 14:19](#); [15:36](#); [Lk. 24:30–31](#); [Acts 1:24–25](#); [4:24–31](#); [27:35](#)). As Cartwright said:

“God has ordained the minister to this end, that, as in public meetings he only is the mouth of the Lord from Him to the people, even so he ought to be the only mouth of the people from them unto the Lord...”²²¹

To only give some of the argumentation for this principle: Under the Mosaic Law the priests (with the Levites helping, these being the Old Testament counterparts to New Testament ministers) alone had the authority and function for offering incense in the temple on behalf of the congregation ([Ex. 30:7](#); [Num. 4:16](#); [Dt. 33:8–10](#); [2 Chron. 29:4–5](#), [11–](#)

²¹⁸ Gillespie, *Notes of Debates*, p. 108.

²¹⁹ Besides general factors, it has been argued by Coldwell Gillespie was the author of “[Reasons for which the Service Book Urged upon Scotland ought to be Refused](#)” (Edinburgh: Anderson, 1638), which objects to the “People’s... answering to the minister...” as part of “a number of Popish superstitions and idolatrous ceremonies”. Baillie testifies to Gillespie’s authorship of this work: *Letters*, 1.90.

²²⁰ On the hermeneutic for interpreting worship in Revelation, see ‘[The Book of Revelation](#)’ in Fentiman, ‘Introduction to the Biblical Teaching on Responsive Readings’ at ‘Responsive Readings in Worship’ (RBO).

²²¹ Cartwright, *Reply to an Answer*, ‘[To the next section contained in the 77th, 78th and a piece of the 79th page](#)’, pp. 138–39p. 139. See also ‘[The Minister: the Mouthpiece of God](#)’ at ‘Responsive Readings in Worship’ (RBO) and ‘[Congregational Prayer, Apart from Necessity, is to be by Ministers](#)’ (RBO).

12), the burning of incense being spiritually symbolic of, and conjoined with prayer (Dt. 10:8; Neh. 9:4-5; Ps. 141:2; Lk. 1:10; Rev. 8:3-4). In the New Testament “preaching and prayer are joined as several parts of the same office,” that is, the pastor’s office, in Acts 6:2-4 and 20:36, and in Jm. 5:14-15 by inference, according to Westminster’s *Form of Presbyterian Church Government*, which concludes that the pastor is “the mouth of the people unto God.”

Yet it is in accord with nature’s light and Christian prudence that one might teach their family, or even adults, the Lord’s prayer by having them pray it together in unison in family worship or otherwise, which shows that the action of itself is not inherently wrong. As calling upon God is taught by nature’s light,²²² and man, being a social creature, ought to worship God together and give Him the whole of their collective glory, so it would have been natural for unfallen man to appoint one person to lead the rest in calling upon God, for good order (just as a group of Christians today might ask one person to pray for all present). Thus, having one pray on behalf of all is for natural convenience, decency and good order, as all praying in unison is often not possible, and when done, has a degree of unnaturalness and inconvenience to it.²²³

Seeing as one speaking on behalf of all is not peculiarly religious, as natural society uses such quite frequently, so this principle is fundamentally natural and was adopted into Scriptural worship for its natural convenience. The Mosaic Law did have a rigor and severity to those outward, material ordinances, being symbolic of Christ’s exclusive intercession for us, which has fallen away with that economy (Jn. 1:17; Acts 15:10; 2 Cor. 3:6-18; Gal. 3:23-25; 4:1-4, 9, 21-31; 5:1-3; Col. 2:14; Heb. 9:10).²²⁴ Who will say a ruling elder, who has not the ministry of the Word by office,²²⁵ praying for the congregation in Lord’s Day worship, apart from necessity, is on par with Nadab and Abihu, and Korah’s

²²² WCF 21.1: “The light of nature showeth that there is a God, who hath lordship and sovereignty over all; is good, and doeth good unto all; and is therefore to be feared, loved, praised, called upon...” On nature’s light, see ‘On the Light of Nature’ (RBO).

²²³ The leading presbyterian and Independent ministers at the *Savoy Conference* (1661), including nine Westminster divines: “That the repetitions and responsals of the clerk and people, and the alternate reading of the psalms and hymns with a confused murmur in the congregation, whereby what is read is less intelligible and therefore unedifying, may be omitted...” Baxter, *The Grand Debate between the most reverend Bishops & the Presbyterian Divines appointed by His Sacred Majesty...* (London, 1661), ‘Exceptions’, pp. 3-4.

²²⁴ See Fentiman, ‘Leviticus 10 Cleared & Vindicated regarding the Doctrine of Impurities of Worship’, ‘New Testament’ to the end, at ‘On Impurities in Worship’ (RBO).

²²⁵ See ‘Ruling Elders do not have the Authority for Preaching, or Laboring in, or Ministering, the Word in Public Worship by Office’ at ‘Ruling Elders’ (RBO).

rebellion?²²⁶ Rather, Church government is for the well-being of the Church, and that by way of good order. Good order and decency is of secondary ethical weight compared to moral law,²²⁷ even in public worship, as Paul said reforming things in the public Church order could wait: “the rest will I set in order when I come.” (1 Cor. 11:34)

Not all things respecting worship in Scripture regulated in the same way or are of the same importance. Because two material actions differ from each other, such as (1) the minister praying on behalf of all, versus (2) unison prayers, does not mean there is not common, formal ground of true worship between them. Both overlap in true internal, spiritual prayer in Christ in unison; and true internal worship is more fundamental and important than external worship.²²⁸ While unison, verbal prayers in regular Church worship are outwardly defective in their unnaturalness and inconvenience, yet Scripture teaches ‘God may Graciously Accept Impure Obedience & Worship’.²²⁹

Not only may such impure worship be graciously accepted of God, but some may be righteously, personally performed. Baxter gave an analogy similar to impure worship being likened to expired food. One would prefer not to eat it if better is available, but given sufficient reason (such as not having anything else to eat), it is better to eat the expired food for the good in it, as the defects do not utterly corrupt it as to make it more harmful than good. Those that choose to starve instead because they have a divine-right to better, more nutritious food (or worship), cannot be said to do well under the providence God has laid them.²³⁰ Baxter, speaking for the leading presbyterian and Independent ministers and nine Westminster divines at the [Savoy Conference](#) (1661), helpfully clarifies about responsibility in the matter:

“...rulers have authority to command that which is good, though not in a faulty manner; and when we cannot do the good without the faulty manner, it is their fault and not ours... So that we obey the ruler or guide as a determiner of the means of concord, which is necessary, and not *sub ratione erroris* [under the reason of the error], as misdetermining, though [it be] in that which is misdetermined...”

²²⁶ On the difference see Fentiman, ‘[On Nadab & Abihu in Lev. 10: Is it Consistent with Impure Worship being Accepted of God?](#)’, especially the ‘[Application](#)’.

²²⁷ See the ‘[Intro](#)’ to ‘[On the Ordinances, Order & Policy of the Church](#)’ (RBO).

²²⁸ See ‘[On Internal & External Worship](#)’ (RBO).

²²⁹ at ‘[On Impurities in Worship](#)’ (RBO).

²³⁰ For Baxter’s quotes, see the ‘[Intro](#)’ under the section ‘[Some Impure Worship may be \(and even must be\) Lawfully, Personally Performed...](#)’ at ‘[On Impurities in Worship](#)’ (RBO).

The mistaken ruler bids us not sin: It's his sin to choose a mis-circumstance; and it is not his own action that he bids us do, but ours: And it's to us a lawful circumstance, because necessary to concord and commanded, though mistakenly."²³¹

Thus, to return to the Scriptural example in [Acts 21:20–26](#) (with [16:3](#) & [18:21](#)), when new Christians with serious misconceptions about what God required for public worship thought that Paul (a mature Christian teacher) taught against their way of worship, which was seriously defective, Paul, without a fuss, at the instigation of other Christian leaders, publicly led and performed that defective worship to prevent scandal to the erring, for the sake of visible Christian unity. Rather than dissent and abstain, Paul publicly led and participated in that defective, burdensome worship for the greater good. If that was true for inferior, carnal ordinances with no spiritual efficacy ([2 Cor. 3:6–17](#); [Heb. 7:18–19](#); [8:13](#); [9:10](#); [10:1–4](#)), how much more does it pertain to impurities in the greater, spiritual, efficacious and enduring ordinances of God?

Hence, when you are in church, ought you to abstain from vocalizing unison prayers (yet praying along in your mind), or should you verbally join in? As (1) one can morally join in, (2) one ought not to separate further than is warranted or one must,²³² (3) as persons may be scandalized by your not joining in,²³³ and (4) as there is a positive good, even obligation in giving place to visible unity in the public order (though defective),²³⁴

²³¹ Baxter, *English Nonconformity*, bk. 3, pp. 13-14; on Baxter speaking for this group see p. 11 and his pronouns on p. 13.

²³² Baxter: "In a word, 1. all that separate for a wrong cause, 2. or further than they separate from Christ, or than Christ would have them separate, do sin. 2. But they that renounce any corruption as such, and the Church no further than *secundum quid*, 'as it is' faulty, do well..." [Baxter on Worship](#), p. 85.

²³³ Whether in people (not understanding) losing Christian comfort by being perplexed about seeing you abstain, thinking you are not doing something right and good, or feel condemned by you in their worship.

²³⁴ Beza: "There are others on the other side [including Beza as what follows shows] which hold that certain ancient rites (besides the apostolical ordinances) are to be retained, partly as profitable and necessary: partly also albeit not necessary, yet to be tolerated for concord sake's." *Epistolarum theologicarum Theodori Bezae Vezelii, liber unus* (Geneva: Vignon, 1575), Epistle 8, p. 70, as translated by John Sprint, *Cassander Anglicanus, showing the Necessity of Conformity to the Prescribed Ceremonies of our Church in Case of Deprivation* (London: Bill, 1618), 'Reformed Practices', 'Practice', pp. 175–76.

Baxter speaking for the leading presbyterians and Independents and nine Westminster divines at the [Savoy Conference](#) (1661): "XXI. We never held it unlawful to do one of these actions though it were by mistake unlawfully commanded; e.g. If the rulers prescribe a time, place, meter, tune, etc. unfit, if it be not so bad as to overthrow the ends and use of the worship, the fault of the commander will not disoblige us from the duty of obeying.

the good of participating in vocalized unison prayers, though with inconveniencies, but thought decent and good by everyone else, is likely the way to fulfill the most good and avoid the most ill effects. Beza said that some of the reformed, such as himself, thought some “rites... albeit not necessary, yet... are to be tolerated for the sake of concord.”²³⁵

To measure this issue by Corbet’s principle above: Church superiors are obliging one in some degree to do what is “above their sphere to command, namely,” something “not necessary *in genere* [in its kind], yet” it is “not simply evil.” Ill consequences of vocally joining in unison prayers are usually not higher in degree than praying silently; and the inconvenience or hurt would fall on oneself rather than others (instead of the other way around). Hence you may vocally participate in unison prayers and such is “not formal obedience, but” it is “done for the end’s sake and to avoid evil.” If the ill consequences of vocally joining in such would be higher than abstaining, one should refrain.

If one is a minister: If God graciously accepts the people’s unison prayers, though less than decent and somewhat unnatural and carnal, and one has the opportunity to bless Christ’s people in their public order as they can bear (Mk. 4:33; Jn. 16:12; 2 Cor. 1:24; 1 Thess. 2:7; Heb. 5:11–14), given all that has gone before, may not one stronger condescend to their weaknesses and participatingly lead them therein in order to build them up in the primary things of God’s kingdom: righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost (Rom. 14:17)?²³⁶ “But I, brothers, could not address you as spiritual people, but as people

And whereas some argue that no man has authority to sin, therefore, we are not bound to obey that which is no act of authority: I answer, rulers have authority to command that which is good, though not in a faulty manner; and when we cannot do the good without the faulty manner, it is their fault and not ours: e.g. If an inconvenient time, place, text, tune, etc. be chosen, the union and concord which is held by agreeing in those modes is necessary: He that will not join in them cannot join in the worship. So that we obey the ruler or guide as a determiner of the means of concord, which is necessary, and not *sub ratione erroris* [under the reason of the error], as misdetermining, though in that which is misdetermined...

We never pray without some fault in the manner, and yet must rather do it so than not at all. The mistaken ruler bids us not sin: It’s his sin to choose a mis-circumstance; and it is not his own action that he bids us do, but ours: And it’s to us a lawful circumstance, because necessary to concord and commanded, though mistakingly.” *English Nonconformity*, 1689), bk. 3, pp. 13–14.

²³⁵ Beza, *Epistolarum theologicarum Theodori Bezae Vezelii, liber unus* (Geneva: Vignon, 1575), Epistle 8, p. 70. See Beza’s larger quote in English under the section ‘On Dt. 4:2 & 12:32’ at ‘The Regulative Principle of Worship’ (RBO).

²³⁶ God the Son did this in two appearances in Judges (Judg. 6:11–12, 14, 16, 19–24; 13:3, 6, 8–9, 13–23) and at the Last Passover with his disciples (Lk. 22:15). The apostle Paul did so in Acts 21:20–26 where the worship did not bind of itself by divine authority. If one respond that God’s authority peculiarly allowed those rituals in Acts 21:20–26, it is responded that it has been seen God’s authority allows some impurities in God-ordained worship to be righteously done. If the stronger were to materially accommodate the weaker in erroneous, non-divinely ordained religious ceremonies in Rom. 14:15–16, 19–21, might a minister

of the flesh, as infants in Christ. I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for it." (1 Cor. 3:1-2) "We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification." (Rom. 15:1-2).

Objections:

Will-worship, Facilitating Sin & Christians who are not Weak

Clearing three objections will lead us further in the truth: (1) But is not laymen regularly, verbally speaking corporate prayers adding by our will to God's worship, and hence is will-worship, as condemned in Col. 2:23? No, for the reasons given. That which is so strongly condemned in Colossians is not any mistaking of a person's will in seeking to offer Scriptural worship, or any joining in necessary duties with impurities in them for higher ends, but rather it plainly involved bringing in Old Testament rites (as such), the worshipping of angels, committed ascetism and allegiance to the mere authority and doctrines of men as a fountain principle, as necessary, substantial and sanctifying worship (Col. 2:14-23).²³⁷ That is far different than concurring with and fulfilling God's will through materially participating in certain, partly impure worship, being divinely obliged thereto by God's will.

(2) One might object to ministers leading responsive readings with [Westminster Larger Catechism](#) #99.6, a go-to principle of Separatists: "That under one sin... all of the same kind are forbidden... together with all the causes, means, occasions, and appearances thereof, and provocations thereunto." Yet the same Catechism answer also says: "That under one... duty, all of the same kind are... commanded; together with all the causes, means, occasions, and appearances thereof, and provocations thereunto," and this "according to the duty of their places" (in #99.7). What is more fundamental and binding, unity in the substance of God's commands or separation therefrom?

there in Rome have publicly distributed vegetables at a love-feast on the differently esteemed days in question to the weak and all the Christians alike?

²³⁷ See also [footnote 263](#) below.

WLC #99.8 rightly states, “That in what is commanded to others, we are bound, according to our places and callings, to be helpful to them...” The same answer goes on with the qualification that we are bound “to take heed of partaking with others in what is forbidden them.” Yet if the weak are commanded, or at least allowed,²³⁸ to be fully persuaded in their own minds (Rom. 14:5) in performing their partially-erroneous worship observances, then those observances are not forbidden them. The selective Separatist reading of WLC #99 certainly is not necessary as most of the Westminster divines were opposed to Separatism.

(3) Notwithstanding, one might object: There are many Christians, congregations, pastors and denominations who cannot be justly considered weak, but rather are manifestly hard-hearted in clinging to their impurities. Yet it may be argued from the greater to the lesser: Authorities of God’s people were at one time, for many generations, divinely obliged to publicly uphold and enforce no-fault divorce (Dt. 24:1–4), contrary to the Scriptural precedent of Gen. 2:18–25 and Jesus’ later teaching (Mt. 5:31–32; 19:3–9; Mk. 10:2–12), for the common and perpetual reasons of the hardness of the people’s hearts (Mt. 19:8; Mk. 10:5), the strength of the influence of the dominant cultural sins of the day and for the people’s communal order, peace and good in their circumstances according to what they could bear, until greater reformation could be made with a fuller manifestation of divine light and Spiritual power.²³⁹ The corruption of no-fault divorce from obedience unto God in the First Commandment, and as it grievously breaks the Seventh Commandment, was a worse corruption of worship,²⁴⁰ that was to be permissively, publicly enforced,²⁴¹ than most worship impurities in protestant Churches.

Minister: Feed Christ’s flock and work towards the church, through the power of the Word and his Spirit, laying aside unnecessary, inconvenient public ceremonies and

²³⁸ Πληροφορεῖσθω is a present, imperative, middle or passive, third person singular verb.

²³⁹ See ‘On Permissive, Mosaic Laws of God’ at ‘On Positive Laws & Ordinances, & the Law of Nations’ (RBO).

²⁴⁰ See ‘Worship Includes Keeping God’s Commandments & Good Works, in a Less Narrow Respect’ at ‘On the Definition of Worship’ (RBO).

²⁴¹ See ‘Effective Permission’ and ‘Upholding Impure Standards of Civil Law’ in Fentiman, ‘Theses on the Ethics of Civil Voting, with a Correction to the Booklet, Christ Centered Voting’ at ‘On Voting’ (RBO).

aspects thereof ([Acts 15:28](#)) for a better way ([Acts 18:26](#)), per God's will and as Westminster directed.²⁴²

2. Responsive Readings

To turn to responsive readings, the only clear and explicit verbal congregational worship responses found in Scripture (outside the book of Revelation),²⁴³ besides saying "Amen," are short, extraordinary exclamations (e.g. [2 Chron. 7:3](#); [Ps. 106:48](#)). There are no regular or lengthy responsive congregational worship readings in Scripture.²⁴⁴ Responsive readings in modern churches typically fall into three categories: (1) salutations, (2) stunted praise, and (3) Scripture readings.

(1) Salutory addresses and unison responses are not particularly religious, but are sometimes used in natural society (such as by teachers in classrooms, speakers on stage, etc.). However, as they are so infrequently used in current, American culture (almost not at all), though the custom²⁴⁵ may be civilly recognizable, their much more frequent use in some churches is proportionably unwarranted. This however is an inconvenience of too frequent of a civil custom,²⁴⁶ which is not the same as something inherently wrong of itself, or idolatry.²⁴⁷

Paul's epistles, where he says, "Grace be to you, etc." ([2 Cor. 1:2](#); [Gal. 1:3](#), etc.) are often claimed as warrant for salutory addresses. Yet not everything in a letter is thereby

²⁴² "The people's responsals... we judge it most expedient that the practice and use of them be not continued, as well for the nearer uniformity betwixt the Churches of both Kingdoms, as for their greater peace and harmony within themselves, and their edifying one another in love." Gillespie, *Notes of Debates*, p. 108. See especially though the [Preface](#) to Westminster's "Directory for the Publick Worship of God," which *Directory* laid responsals aside.

²⁴³ On the hermeneutic for interpreting worship in Revelation, see [footnote 219](#) above.

²⁴⁴ That is outside the book of Revelation, if those in it be counted as regular; they are not as lengthy as those of many churches. On the rest of Scripture, see '[The Old Testament Evidence](#)' and following in Fentiman, 'Introduction to the Biblical Teaching on Responsive Readings' at 'Responsive Readings in Worship' (RBO).

²⁴⁵ On the legitimacy of justified social customs in worship, see '[On Natural Gestures, Signs & Customs about Worship...](#)' (RBO).

²⁴⁶ See '[Principles for the Use of Indifferent Things in Worship](#)' at 'On Ceremonies' (RBO).

²⁴⁷ See '[Not All Deviating Worship is Idolatry](#)' at 'On Idolatry' (RBO). Though too frequent of a civil custom be imprudent and unnatural to that degree, yet it retains its nature as a civil custom and does not thereby take on a religious principle, just as a too frequent social custom in a civil context, though going beyond the light of nature in this respect, does not therein become, in itself or in its exercise, distinctly religious.

a part of worship, nor does it precedent unison congregational responses. But such addresses and responses are essentially prayers (in wishing grace through the Lord upon someone), and unison congregational prayers have been addressed.

(2) Congregational responses of stunted praise (“Praised be the Lord,” etc.) are also essentially prayers of praise.

(3) Responsive Scripture readings are of greater moment in that, in the words of Westminster’s [Larger Catechism](#) #156, “all are not to be permitted to read the Word publicly to the congregation (Dt. 31:9,11–13; Neh. 8:2,3; Neh. 9:3–5)” and such is part of the ministry of the Word (1 Tim. 4:13–14), which is part of the pastor’s office, as Westminster’s Form of Presbyterian Church Government states (under “[Pastors](#)”).²⁴⁸

I have previously made the detailed case that responsive Scripture readings fall short of the Scriptural standard.²⁴⁹ That conclusion remains sure with regard to their non-extraordinary use. Upon further considerations, however, I see that I erred in concluding that ordinary responsive Scripture readings were therefore wholly forbidden and ought never to be done. John Calvin called them “tolerable,” that is “tolerable unfitnesses.”²⁵⁰

Unison responsive Scripture readings, being done occasionally and more extraordinarily in Scripture (2 Chron. 7:3; Ps. 106:48 with 106:1; 111:1; 112:1, etc.) are hence not inherently wrong as public worship. Frequency and length of a lawful matter is an issue of due circumstances or conveniency.

Regarding ministers being appointed to publicly read the Word by office: [John Owen](#) allowed that “in the state of uncorrupted nature, there should have been some

²⁴⁸ [William Gouge](#), a Westminster divine, and nine Westminster divines involved at the [Savoy Conference](#) (1661) concurred; their quotes are found under ‘[The English Puritans](#)’ at ‘Responsive Readings in Worship’ (RBO).

²⁴⁹ Fentiman, ‘[Introduction to the Biblical Teaching on Responsive Readings](#)’ at ‘Responsive Readings in Worship’ (RBO).

²⁵⁰ *tolerabiles ineptiae*; this has also been translated as: “tolerable fooleries” or “inept things”. *A Brief Discourse of the Troubles begun at Franckford in Germany, anno Domini 1554, about the Book of Common Prayer & Ceremonies* ([Heidelberg: Schirat] 1574), [The Answer and Judgment of... John Calvin](#), p. 35. The Genevan ministers: “Many things may, yea and ought to be born and tolerated which are notwithstanding not justly commanded. First therefore we answer that albeit these things (as we judge) are not rightly restored to their possession in the congregations, yet seeing that they are not of those kind of things which are of their own nature impious and ungodly, they seem to us not to be of such weight that the shepherds should rather give over their functions than receive the apparel, or that the flock should refuse the public food of the soul rather than to receive the same from the shepherds that are appareled herein...” *Troubles begun at Franckford*, [The Answer of the Ministers of Geneva](#), p. 225.

[principle]... to deal with others for and in the name of God,"²⁵¹ as, by the diversity and ordering of nature, it would be appropriate for husbands to teach the things of God to their wives ([Gen. 2:17-18](#); [3:2-3](#); [Eph. 5:25-26](#)) and children ([Dt. 6:6-7](#)), etc. Do not fathers read Scripture to Christ's lambs in family worship? Is not one reading aloud so others can hear, without the confusion²⁵² of many voices, something that is commonly done in society? And was not God appointing ministers to do this in light of their abilities and calling due to the well-being of order, seeing as others might do it in necessity or as appropriate even before an assembly of God's people, such as non-priestly Levites ([Neh. 8:7-9, 17-18](#); [9:3-4](#) with [Dt. 31:10-13](#)), king Josiah (a layman, who was not a prophet, [2 Kn. 23:1-2](#)) and the civil governors of king Jehoshaphat ([2 Chron. 17:7-9](#))?

Hence a defect of order in regular circumstances, such as laymen publicly reading Scripture in a worshipping assembly of God's people, is far different than the weight of something inherently wrong in and of itself, and thus absolutely prohibited, especially when one looks to the best reasons which have been alleged for it, namely ordering worship by nature's light, Christian prudence and the general rules of the Word ([WCF 1.6](#)), including for edification, in persons reciprocally, physically and spiritually stirring each other up ([Prov. 27:17](#); [Rom. 15:14](#); [Heb. 3:13](#); [10:24](#)) to praise the Lord.²⁵³ While much

²⁵¹ Owen, *An Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews...* (London: Tegg, 1840), exercitation 26, "Of the Origin of the Priesthood of Christ", §5, [pp. 415-16](#).

²⁵² Cartwright: "Another fault is that all the people are appointed in diverse places to say after the minister, whereby not only the time is unprofitably wasted and a confused voice of the people, one speaking after another..." *Reply to an Answer Made, "To the 77th, 78th and a piece of the 79th page"*, p. 138.

Leading presbyterians and congregationalist ministers at the [Savoy Conference](#) (1661) seeking the revision of the Anglican Prayer-Book: "That the repetitions and responsals of the clerk and people and the alternate reading of the psalms and hymns, which caused a confused murmur in the congregation, may be omitted: the minister being appointed for the people in all public services appertaining unto God and the Holy Scriptures, both of the Old and New Testament, intimating the people's part in public prayers to be only with silence and reverence to attend thereunto, and to declare their consent at the close, by saying 'Amen'." *The Book of Common Prayer, as Amended by the Westminster Divines, A.D. 1661*, ed. Charles Shields (Philadelphia: Claxton, 1867), Appendix 2, "The Presbyterian Exceptions Against the Book of Common Prayer", [p. 144](#).

²⁵³ The Anglican bishops at the [Savoy Conference](#) (1661): "that very reason they should continue, because they do edify... by quickening, continuing and uniting our devotion, which is apt to freeze or sleep, or flat in a long continued prayer or form; it is necessary therefore for the edifying of us therein to be often called upon and awakened by frequent amens, to be excited and stirred up by mutual exultations, provocations, petitions, holy contentions and strivings which shall most show his own and stir up others' zeal to the glory of God. For this purpose alternate reading, repetitions and responsals are far better than a long tedious prayer..." Baxter, *Grand Debate, "Papers,"* p. 66. Note justifying a practice on nature's light and laws, and Christian prudence, does not necessarily need a Scripture citation.

could be said in response,²⁵⁴ note that if these, or similar ones, be the formal reasons and intent for Christians reading responsively, which the Lord looks to, they are not far off the mark.

If one would participatingly accommodate a measure of indecency in a civil assembly for the good in it and out of respect and submission to public order, how much more ought one to do so in charity for the Church's public worship, as such common and legitimately applied civil principles do not need a Scripture precedent and "God is not the author of confusion, but of peace." (1 Cor. 14:33)? Often doing something that is inconvenient and less than fully decent or in the best order, given the larger context, is more decent, orderly²⁵⁵ (1 Cor. 14:40) and conducive to peace,²⁵⁶ and less confusing, than not, especially for leaders. Are not peace, love and mercy weightier matters of the Law (Mt. 23:23; Mk. 12:33; Rom. 14:19; 1 Cor. 13:13)? and external ceremonial observances are to give way to moral law? (Hos. 6:6; Mk. 12:33) "But if ye had known what this meaneth, 'I will have mercy, and not sacrifice,' ye would not have condemned the guiltless." (Mt. 12:7) Even Westminster did not condemn responsive readings.²⁵⁷

²⁵⁴ Such as: (1) Why, if these things be by nature's light, etc. they are found nowhere in the historical Church in the Old or New Testament? (2) A claim to nature's light ought not to override an ordinance of the Lord (presumed to be in accord with nature's light) in regular circumstances. (3) Was the apostolic worship insufficient without these additional helps? In response to the bishops' argument the presbyterian and independent ministers at Savoy certainly had much to say, which follows in the citation.

²⁵⁵ Such as in a person eating the distasteful and questionable food at another's house so as to prevent offense rather than abstain. How much more in the House of God?

²⁵⁶ Zanchi: "Wherefore many things are to be tolerated by the ministers that the peace of churches be not rent and that schisms may be avoided, so that they be not such things or doctrines which do fight with the foundation and do heave at it;" *On Philipians*, ch. 1, fol. 45, as trans. by Sprint, *Cassander Anglicanus*, 'Reformed Practices', p. 167.

²⁵⁷ Gillespie: "The people's responsals... Concerning other customs or rites in the worship of God, formerly received in any of the Kingdoms, which though not condemned in this Directory [of Westminster], have been, or apparently will be, occasions of divisions and offences, as it is far from our intention that those or the like unnecessary burdens should be laid upon any, or any compelled thereto, so we judge it most expedient that the practice and use of them be not continued, as well for the nearer uniformity betwixt the Churches of both Kingdoms..." *Notes of Debates*, p. 108. The *Preface* to Westminster's Directory for the Public Worship of God likewise does not speak of the Anglican ceremonies (of which responsals were the most common) as inherently wrong, but as "unprofitable and burdensome" and "a matter of endless strife and contention in the Church, and a snare".

While Westminster's *Form of Presbyterian Form of Presbyterian Church Government* says "to read the Scriptures publicly" "belongs to" the pastoral office, it does not restrict it thereto. While Westminster's *Directory* says "Reading of the word in the congregation, being part of the public worship of God... is to be performed by the pastors and teachers," yet the Directory puts this forth without stating the formal grounds for it, allowing any who could submit to this *de facto* practice, for the here and now, to do so, as

Objections:
Leading in what is Wrong,
Confirming Superstition & Interpretive Scandal

One may object: (1) But is not a minister leading responsive readings inducing others to do what is wrong, which is prohibited by God's Law (WLC #99.5-8)? Besides what has been said, to put it in a bit different way: Given that the impurities in responsive readings do not so corrupt the reading of the Word as to make the hurt more than the benefit, overturning the profit and substance of the ordinance itself, so God graciously receives this worship from sincere²⁵⁸ Christians.²⁵⁹ Leading weaker brothers in substantially good²⁶⁰ and Biblical worship as their consciences will bear (Rom. 14:5), especially given public order, is to direct them to their duty, which WLC #99.5-8 also obliges us to; and the moral necessity to do the greater good ordained of God, though mixed with impurities (without morally approving them), is greater than to abstain from that substantial and greater good because of its impurities. This is not to do "what God forbids," which "is at no time to be done," because this is precisely what "He commands" and "is always our duty" (WLC #99.5). If one does not agree, but believes it is sinful to ever personally perform, or direct others to do good things with impurities, inconvenience, an association of evil or that which another person could take scandal at,

some things therein were "set forth" not according to invariable divine prescription, but "according to the rules of Christian prudence, agreeable to the general rules of the word of God." (Preface)

When Westminster defined things for faith in its doctrinal standards, such as WLC #156, it uses very qualified and minimally-restrictive language: "Although all are not to be permitted to read the Word publicly to the congregation..." As so many of the members of Westminster were Anglicans (see footnote 25 above), it is very likely this specifying of "read... to the congregation" was intended to allow for responsive Scripture readings by the congregation, as Westminster divines who approved of responsive Scripture readings could affirm and vote for that language.

Westminster divine Thomas Coleman advising the House of Commons on setting up Church government (which would include public worship): "Hold out the practice, but not the ground: It will gather more, nay all, that hold it not unlawful; men differently principled may meet in one practice." *Hopes Deferred & Dashed, Observed in a Sermon to the Honourable House of Commons* (London: Meredith, 1645), p. 24.

²⁵⁸ See 'God may Accept Sincere, Impure Worship' in the 'Intro' to 'On Impurities in Worship' (RBO).

²⁵⁹ See 'God may Graciously Accept Impure Obedience & Worship' at 'On Impurities in Worship' (RBO).

²⁶⁰ Baxter: "the Litany they call conjuring and the responses they take for a formal jocular playing with holy things, when in all these, the humble heavenly Christian is lifting up his soul to God." *Cure of Church Divisions*, pt. 1, direction 32, p. 188.

welcome to Separatism. Our puritan authors' *Scriptural Refutation* of it will be instructive to you.

(2) Lastly, it is objected that near the whole assembly may superstitiously believe that responsive readings are specifically ordained of God as holy worship. To join with them in that is to participate in their superstition and for them to interpret you as doing so, confirming them in it. Others who know better will interpret your actions as scandalous.²⁶¹

If such be superstition (Scripture only uses that term of idolaters, [Acts 17:16, 22](#)),²⁶² yet Paul in [Acts 16:1–5](#) conformed to and publicly performed an inconvenient ceremony

²⁶¹ A major dividing point, if not the principal issue, between the Scottish indulged and non-indulged ministers (to be discussed below) was whether a lawful action might be done if it incurred interpretive approbation of an evil or interpretive scandal.

Wamphray: "it is undeniable that these indulged persons, accepting this Indulgence, conveyed through such a channel and flowing from such a fountain [as the Erastian supremacy], as is already shown... are interpretatively assenters unto this Usurpation." *The History of the Indulgence, showing its Rise, Conveyance, Progress & Acceptance: together with a Demonstration of the Unlawfulness thereof & an Answer to Contrary Objections...* (1678), pp. 7–8, 10, 58, 82, 112, 124–26; idem, *The Banders Disbanded, or an Accurate Discourse Solidly & Plainly Demonstrating how Inconvenient, Scandalous & Sinful it is, in the present circumstances of the Church of Scotland for ministers of Christ there, that they may obtain a pretended liberty to preach and administer the sacraments in such and such particular parishes, to give bond to their present rulers, that they shall live peaceably...* (1681), pp. 26–27.

The indulged sometimes acknowledged their actions involved an interpretive scandal and approbation of evils to some (just as the actions of those who refused the indulgence did), though not justly, yet they denied this to be sufficient reason to forgo what they considered to be their necessary duty. John Bairdie, speaking of the indulged: "Neither are they involved in any interpretative compliance or symbolizing with the evils under consideration, so far as a just testimony can exonerate them thereof. And moreover they are not wanting to give practical testimony for God against the evils of the time in refusing all practical conforming thereunto or compliance therewith;" *Balm from Gilead, or the Differences about the Indulgence Stated & Impleaded in a Sober & Serious Letter to Ministers & Christians in Scotland* (1674; London, 1681), p. 118. Wodrow, *History*, 2.209, fn. Vilant, *Review & Examination*, 120, 172, 175, 178–79, 237, 460, 517–19, 542.

The Cameronians largely justified their separatism from the Church of Scotland on interpretive scandal; see 'A Difference between the 1680's Cameronians & the later, mid-1700's ff. Reformed Presbyterians' at 'On Cameronianism' (RBO).

The London presbyterians during the Westminster era: "upon consideration of all the ordinances of parliament about Church-government, we find many necessary things not yet established and some things wherein our consciences are not fully satisfied; and therefore in our beginning to act we cannot but see how sinisterly we are like to be interpreted by many who are prone to misconstrue all our actions of this nature." as quoted in Vilant, *Review & Examination*, p. 27. That necessary duties override interpretive scandal, see 'Occasioning Passive Scandal may be Warranted & Justified by a Necessary or Higher Good' at 'On Scandal & Offenses' (RBO) and especially Baxter, *On Worship & Catholicity* at large.

²⁶² Δεισιδαιμονέστερος. David Dickson: "Because God has taken both [the strong and weak] into the fellowship of the grace of his Son, therefore it is unworthy that in such a case one should despise or condemn another. For it was unequal that they which were weak should be contemned by them that were stronger as superstitious and novices..." *An Exposition of all St. Paul's Epistles...* (London: R.I., 1659), on [Rom. 14](#), v. 3, p. 33.

(circumcision), unnecessary in itself, with interpretive approbation and scandal to others who were sure to misunderstand. He held the action to be materially indifferent of itself and one he had liberty over doing or not. Paul so acted precisely due to the (reasonable) “superstitious” expectation of the majority (note this) of God’s visible people in the vicinity, lest he scandalize them in abstaining therefrom. Paul knew this majority would erroneously interpret his action as specifically ordained of God as holy worship, confirming them in it, yet Paul did this for the larger context of the greater good and edification of Christ’s kingdom ([Acts 16:1-5](#)).²⁶³ There is every reason to believe Paul would have performed such a ceremony as often as the circumstances and need required, as he did so again in [Acts 18:21](#) and [21:26-27](#), partly due to the historical “customs” of the Church ([Acts 21:21](#)), till they could be reformed (even after his lifetime), so long as the issue did not tend to overturn the Gospel itself ([Gal. 2:3-5, 16-21](#)) and his actions caused more good than they occasioned ill effects. See Baxter’s excellent delineations on this subject.²⁶⁴

By participating in certain impure worship other Christians are not distracted from the Lord ([Rom. 14:6](#)), but are confirmed in the concord of Christ’s kingdom through Christians (who may disagree with aspects of things) walking peaceably and

²⁶³ Baxter: “Many such things may be done materially on other reasons (as for the Church’s good, the furtherance of the Gospel, the winning of men to God, the avoiding of scandal, or of hurt to others or ourselves, etc.) when they are not to be done in formal obedience, out of conscience to the authority imposing (as if it be commanded by one that has no just power).” *A Christian Directory* (1673), pt. 3, “Cases of Conscience”, [question 132](#), p. 888.

²⁶⁴ Baxter: “If we avoid another’s superstition as to the form or intention which makes it superstition, and this as a sin, we do well: If we avoid the matter itself which he uses superstitiously, because it is by him made scandalous, we do our duty when it is scandalous indeed and no contrary greater accident makes it our duty. But if we take it to be simply superstition or sin to do materially the same action which a superstitious person does, we are superstitious in avoiding his superstitious act.”

Baxter elsewhere speaks of “that which is true superstition indeed, by which here I mean the making of any new parts of religion to ourselves and fathering them upon God, who never made them...” and yet affirms that such material actions (without the superstition) may be done on other accounts of moral necessity: “I do not speak here of doing or not doing the same things upon any other account (as human duties or mere conveniences or the like), but as they are falsely pretended to be divine.” *Church Divisions*, pt. 1, [Direction 58](#), pp. 286 & 282.

On the issue of false Christian teachers seeking to impose varying degrees of erroneous practices taking away persons’ Christian liberty, and resisting them without separating, which Galatians and Col. 2 are principally concerned with, see Baxter’s careful and precise discussion at ‘[Christian Liberty need not always be Asserted & Exercised](#)’ at ‘On Christian Liberty’ (RBO). Note that there is a difference between one having ability (and possibly authority) to resist outwardly and openly, effectively (as in numerous Biblical examples), versus situations where one does not (such as in examples where righteous priests and Levites remained in the Church’s ministry during grievously, declining or declined periods ([Num. 25](#); [2 Sam. 15:23-29](#); [2 Kn. 11](#); [1 Chron. 6:8-15](#); [2 Chron. 17:8-9](#); [Ezra 2:1, 36-40](#); [7:6](#); [Neh. 13:10-11](#))).

accommodating wherever possible, which will often do more for warming persons up unto Scriptural truths and reforming the Church than the alternative.²⁶⁵

Working Towards the Same Goal

To continue our historical narrative: United, open and unyielding disobedience in England to the absolutist king in the early-1600's, if the numbers were there, would have started a war. That was something English puritans could not muster or afford, but it was something Gillespie and the Scots, being a bit further geographically removed, thought was for the lesser harm and greater good in 1638. Their actions, through God's providence, precisely in the king seeking to finance putting them down through war, brought about the Long Parliament. Within a few years, the English puritans, in a better situation, also thought it for the greater good to reform the Church against the king's will, occasioning a war with him. The English puritans and the Scots joined forces and brought us, through the long conforming trajectory of the former and the long non-conforming trajectory of the latter,²⁶⁶ the Westminster Assembly and her standards.

There is a unifying goal amongst sincere Christians unto the same target even where they come to different practices: they do all to the glory of God according to his Word and their conscience. That will be, and must be, the glue that holds Christians and their cause together in very fragmented situations ([Rom. 14:8](#)). Though it produce not an outward uniformity in all things ([Rom. 14](#)), it will, in more power than any one prevailing sect can (no matter how pure), work toward the much desired reform and building up of Christ's one Church on earth, by the guidance of his Word here below and his Spirit from above, under the direction of our one Lord, the Head of his body, Jesus Christ.

²⁶⁵ Thomas Goodwin: "...till men do take in light, you should give them all that is comfortable in the condition they are in; we should acknowledge every good thing in every man, in every church, in every thing, and that is a way to work upon men and to prevail with them, as it is, [Phile. 6](#), 'That the communication of thy faith may become effectual by the acknowledgment of every good thing which is in you in Christ Jesus.' It is that which builds men up, by acknowledgment of every good thing that is in them." *Works*, 12 vols. (d. 1680; Edinburgh: Nichol, 1861), vol. 1, *Exposition of Eph. 1* (1681), sermon 36, on 1:22-23, [p. 559](#).

²⁶⁶ The reality is far more mixed and complex than this summary, yet on the whole the two different trajectories were evident, as seen later in how at the Restoration of king Charles II in 1660, his government did not even attempt to impose a liturgy on Scotland, as it did on England.

3. Principled Partial Conformity in Government:

The Church of Scotland under Erastianism & Episcopacy (1660–1688)

Having proved the greater burden of the lawfulness of principled partial conformity in worship under sufficient necessity, partial conformity in Church government and under undue civil impositions should come more easily, as such actions are done less immediately and directly unto the Lord²⁶⁷ and have broader ends (entailing a greater flexibility).²⁶⁸

In making this Scriptural case through tracing Scottish Church history through 1660–1688, first, the valid, Scottish civil authority through the whole era will be established, in consistency with the principles of Rutherford's *Lex Rex*, contra the erroneous political theology of the Scottish, covenanting Cameronians. Then the context will be set in describing the establishment of Erastianism and episcopacy in the 1660's and the consequent ejection of around 30% of the Scottish ministry which would not conform. To give further perspective on this and on what will come, a section will be devoted to proving Church government to be of secondary ethical weight. Then the circumstances of some outed ministers accepting the first civil indulgence to resume their parish ministries (with certain civil restrictions) in 1669 will be surveyed, with their Scriptural and natural law reasons for doing so. The content of the indulged ministers' protest in entering the establishment will be brought to light and their further non-conformity therein will be documented.

Next, it will be demonstrated the actions of the conformed and indulged ministers did not violate the Scottish national covenants and many (even most) of them believed in the continuing obligation thereof, which they saw themselves as upholding by their actions. The factual errors and misrepresentations about the indulged by [Johannes G. Vos](#), a Reformed Presbyterian writer, specifically that the indulged compromised

²⁶⁷ Besides other considerations, see 'Definitions of Worship' (especially Rutherford) and 'On Immediate vs. Mediate Worship' at 'On the Definition of Worship' (RBO), as well as 'Acts of Church Government & Discipline are Worship, in a Secondary Sense' at 'The Ruling of the Church' (RBO). This is inline with our authors below submitting more fully to inequities in Church government and yet not conforming to certain practices in public worship.

²⁶⁸ See p. 47 above.

important Christian principles, will be made apparent and refuted by primary sources, Scripture and natural law. Primary source literature against the indulgences with some history will then be surveyed, as well as the largely unknown and superior literature written by the indulged, defending themselves. The following two sections will meet and overturn the most significant arguments of the most prominent writer against the indulgences, [John Brown of Wamphray](#), showing they are mistaken and/or contrary to a plethora of Scriptures. The Conclusion will take the results further, showing it was not wrong for persons to commune with the indulged (as some held), even if the indulged were wrong.

The implications of all this are of immediate relevance for the multitudes of Christians around the world today who are under not-ideal Church government, or undue civil impositions, or are around those that are so circumstantiated. For the many Christians that do not feel these pressures, it of course may be a short while before you or your children do. Given the many principles and rebalanced priorities that will be learned, part four will turn to seeking the unifying of Christ's one, miserably splintered Church.

Civil Authority, Dethronement & Cameronianism

After around a decade of England and Scotland not being governed by a king, King Charles II was restored to the throne in 1660. For all that his regime initially did and continued to do, such as civilly abjuring the Scottish national covenants, rescinding the previous decades of puritan legislation and penalizing non-conformists, the early Scottish presbyterian ministers that resisted from outside the establishment, or those now popularly called the "covenanters," universally affirmed that Charles II was the valid king of Scotland.²⁶⁹

²⁶⁹ This is seen in their major treatises: [James Stewart](#)'s 1672 work is addressed to "His Sacred Majesty": *An Accompt of Scotland's Grievances by Reason of the D. of Lauderdale's Ministry humbly tendered to His Sacred Majesty* (Edinburgh, 1672). In 1677 Hugh Smith and Alexander Jamieson consistently spoke of the "king"

Not till 1679 (with increasing sanctions on the non-conformists) did a minority of these covenanters split away from the rest, coming to believe Charles II had lost his valid civil authority due to his despotism.²⁷⁰ This group would come to be known as the Cameronians (after one of their early leaders, Richard Cameron). The Cameronians, contrary to the principles and ethos of the Scottish Reformation and the Westminster era

in *An Apology for or Vindication of the Oppressed Persecuted Ministers & Professors of the Presbyterian Reformed Religion in the Church of Scotland: emitted in the Defence of them...* (1677). Robert McWard referred to Charles II as “our king” in 1678 in *The Poor Man's Cup of Cold-Water Ministered to the Saints & Sufferers for Christ in Scotland* (1678), p. 12. John Brown of Wamphray continued to refer to Charles II as “king” in 1679 in *Banders Disbanded* (1681). Donald Cargill (1619–1681) never cast off the king’s authority: Maurice Grant, *No King but Christ* (Evangelical Press, 1988), p. 114. The misnomer title of Grant’s book, “No King but Christ,” was a phrase of Richard Cameron from 1680: Grant, *No King but Christ*, p. 113. See also [footnote 284](#) below.

²⁷⁰ Thomas M’Crie, *The Story of the Scottish Church: from the Reformation to the Disruption* (London: Blackie & Son, 1875),, [p. 335](#); Wodrow, *History*, [3.91](#) (rt col) & [93](#) (rt col).

covenanters,²⁷¹ and nearly all reformed theology before them,²⁷² in a public declaration in 1680 at Sanquhar with around twenty men,²⁷³ “disowned” Charles II as king, saying

²⁷¹ J.D. Douglas: “This was none the less the first time the Covenanters had officially renounced the king because of his claimed supremacy over the Kirk.” in ed. Nigel M. de S. Cameron, *Dictionary of Scottish Church History & Theology* (InterVarsity Press, 1993), “Sanquhar Declaration,” p. 745. M’Crie: “This party now began to maintain that the king, by assuming an Erastian power over the Church, had forfeited all right to the civil obedience of his subjects; a principle which had never been known in the Church of Scotland before...” *Story of the Scottish Church*, p. 330.

M’Crie speaking of the majority, resisting covenanters: “Another party, however, much more numerous though less conspicuous, because less violent and extreme, defended their appearance in arms on other grounds. While they condemned the proceedings of the government as arbitrary and tyrannical, they were not prepared to renounce their allegiance to it in civil matters; they held with the compilers of our [Westminster] Confession [ch. 23], that ‘infidelity or difference in religion doth not make void the magistrate’s just and legal authority, nor free the people from their due obedience to him;’ and though they lamented as much as their brethren the general defection of all classes from the engagements of the [Solemn League and] covenant [1643], they could not see how this denuded the sovereign of his authority, which they were ready to acknowledge so long as he was, by the common consent of the nation, recognized as its ruler. At the same time, they considered themselves warranted to assume the attitude of self-defence against the intolerable oppressions and illegal encroachments which had, ‘contrary to all law and humanity,’ been practiced on them...” *Story of the Scottish Church*, p. 335.

Wodrow: “it was almost fruitless for the moderate party [in 1679] to urge that in the year 1638 the general assembly and the covenanters owned the king’s authority in the plainest and most forcible manner, though he had declared war against them: that though the breach of many of the articles the king had engaged to, was too evident, yet no habile and competent judges had declared so much; and they questioned much how far this could be found competent for them: that this method of throwing off the king’s authority would directly preclude all redress of grievances and getting things that are wrong, righted, and evil counsellors removed who had been the authors and springs of all these evils, and advised the king to them: that their not owning plainly the king’s authority would undoubtedly break the design of their gathering together and effectually hinder multitudes who were willing to join them, from coming to them.” *History*, 3.91 (rt col) & 93 (rt col).

Rutherford: “A wicked prince is as essentially supreme judge as a godly king.” *Lex, Rex, or the Law & the Prince...* (Edinburgh: Ogle & Boyd, 1843), p. 217 (rt col, mid); “If unbelieving kings cease to be kings, then when they commit any fault that makes them in God’s court no members of the Church, they are to be dethroned, which is most seditious doctrine, and so Formalists herein join with Papists.” *A Peaceable & Temperate Plea for Paul’s Presbytery in Scotland* (London: Bartlet, 1642), ch. 19, pp. 297–98.

“But David had reason to hold him [Saul] for his prince and the Lord’s anointed, so long as the people recalled not their grant of royal dignity, as David, or any man, is obliged to honor him as king whom the people makes king, though he were a bloodier and more tyrannous man than Saul.” *Lex Rex*, pp. 58–59. “Any tyrant stands *in titulo* [in the title], so long as the people and the estates who make him king have not recalled their grant; so as neither David, nor any single man, though six hundred with him [1 Sam. 23:13; 30:9], may un-king him or detract obedience from him as king...” *Lex Rex*, p. 59 (lt col, top); “The covenant [between the people and king, whether implicit or explicit] may be materially broken, while the king remains a king, and the subjects remain subjects; but when it is both materially and formally declared by the states to be broken, the people must be free from their allegiance...” *Lex Rex*, p. 61 (rt col, top).

“God looses the bond of kings; that is, when God is to cast off kings, he causes them to loose all authority, and makes them come into contempt with the people... God does not take the authority of the king from him immediately, but mediately, by the people’s hating and despising him, when they see his wickedness...” *Lex Rex*, p. 26 (lt col, bot); “...we know no external lawful calling that kings have now, or their family, to the crown, but only the call of the people. All other calls to us are now invisible and

he had lost all civil authority, “as forefaulted several years” before. They declared “war with such a tyrant and usurper, and all the men of these practices, as enemies to our Lord Jesus Christ and his Cause and Covenant.”²⁷⁴

As Rutherford argued during the Westminster era in *Lex Rex* (1644), that *magnum opus* of puritan political thought, the power of governing is retained in root in the commonality of the people²⁷⁵ and conferred on governors by the community’s consent. Hence by natural law the community’s consent is more fundamental than changeable positive laws and constitutions.

For all the defects, moral transgressions, constitutional changes (whether lawfully or unlawfully done) and (apparent)²⁷⁶ covenant-breaking involved with Charles II being restored to the Scottish throne, he had the consent of the whole community of Scotland, including the outed covenanters ministers, as being their just ruler. If he had not, yet their after-consent was enough to make him their valid governor, according to Scripture, right

unknown; and God would not command us to obey kings and leave us in the dark that we shall not know who is the king.” *Lex Rex*, p. 33 (rt col, bot).

²⁷² In addition to the previous footnote, for some of this evidence, see in general the material on, ‘Against Separation from Impure Civil Governments’ (RBO) and ‘Difference of Religion does not Make Void the Magistrate’s Authority’ (RBO).

²⁷³ Cameron, *Dictionary*, p. 745. Rutherford: “Any tyrant stands *in titulo* [in the title], so long as the people and the estates who make him king have not recalled their grant; so as neither David, nor any single man, though six hundred with him [1 Sam. 23:13; 30:9], may un-king him or detract obedience from him as king...” *Lex Rex*, p. 59 (lt col, top). See the further Rutherford quotes in footnote 270 above.

²⁷⁴ “The Declaration & Testimony of the True Presbyterian, Anti-Prelatic, Anti-Erastian, Persecuted Party in Scotland. Published at Sanquhar, June 22, 1680” at TrueCovenanter.com. From the same: “we for ourselves and all that will adhere to us... do... disown Charles Stewart... as having any right, title, or interest to or in the said crown of Scotland or government; as forfaulted several years since... several years since he should have been denuded of being king, ruler, or magistrate, or having any power, or to be obeyed as such... we... do declare a war with such a tyrant and usurper, and all the men of these practices, as enemies to our Lord Jesus Christ and his Cause and Covenant, and against all such as have any way strengthened him, sided with or acknowledged him in his usurpation and tyranny civil and ecclesiastic...”

²⁷⁵ *Lex Rex*, pp. 1–2, 6, 29, 34, 123–24. See also Rutherford’s quotes in footnote 270 above.

²⁷⁶ Andrew Honyman, a covenanting Resolutioner who conformed in 1662, argued with some force according to commonly accepted principles (even by divines) that the *Solemn League and Covenant* (1643), as a civil bond, may have expired given the revolutions in circumstances: Honyman, *The Seasonable Case of Submission to the Church-Government as now Re-established by Law, Briefly Stated and Determined by a Lover of the Peace of this Church & Kingdom* (Edinburgh: Tyler, 1662), pp. 22–26. His arguments at a few points (pp. 24–26) could have reflected the thought of Charles II himself, who had sworn the SL&C in 1650.

Henry Vane, a parliamentarian and (Independent leaning) member of Westminster had thought the SL&C’s relevance had expired by that time. A publication in 1660 of the London presbyterian ministry, “despite noting a breach of Covenants there was no call for the English people to renew the Solemn League and Covenant.” Kirsteen M. Mackenzie, *Presbyterian Church Government & the Covenanted Interest in the Three Kingdoms 1649–1660*, PhD thesis (University of Aberdeen, 2008), p. 264.

reason and Rutherford.²⁷⁷ Charles II's return was welcome by nearly all and he did restore societal order (after a decade of what many considered near-anarchy), and continued it through his whole reign in both Scotland and England,²⁷⁸ however much he increasingly persecuted the yet remaining, separating, Scottish non-conformists (who, under the worst of the persecution, made up a sliver of the nation).²⁷⁹

²⁷⁷ "This title by conquest, through the people's after-consent, may be turned into a just title, as in the case of the Jews in Caesar's time, for which cause our Savior commanded to obey Caesar, and to pay tribute unto him [Mt. 22:21]... Though the consent be some way over-awed [coerced], yet is it a sort of contract and covenant of loyal subjection made to the conqueror, and therefore sufficient to make the title just; otherwise, if the people never give their consent, the conqueror, domineering over them by violence, has no just title to the crown." *Lex Rex*, p. 47 (lt col, bot). See also 'On Concurrent & *ex post facto* (After the Fact) Consent' at 'On Infant & Household Baptism' (RBO).

²⁷⁸ Charles II in this manner fulfilled much of God's ordinance for magistrates (Rom. 13:3-4). In contrast Rutherford says: "If, then, any cast off the nature of a king, and become habitually a tyrant, in so far he is not from God, nor any ordinance which God does own." *Lex Rex*, p. 117. While Charles II subverted numerous laws, especially with regard to the Church, yet he did much for the catholic good of the subjects and state. Rutherford: "A tyrant is he who habitually sins against the catholic good of the subjects and state, and subverts law." *Lex Rex*, p. 119. The community removing their consent and power from the king ought only to be done "in time of extreme necessity." *Lex Rex*, table of contents (which is original to the first edition), Question 9.

Rutherford and the Scots, despite fighting a defensive war against Charles I, never disowned him as king. Rutherford thought his following lists of charges against Charles I did not unmake his kingship. Note the part about subverting religion: "But the man who is a king may command an idolatrous and superstitious worship—send an army of cut-throats against them, because they refuse that worship, and may reward papists, prelates, and other corrupt men, and may advance them to places of state and honor because they kneel to a tree alter—pray to the East—adore the letters and sound of the word 'Jesus'—teach and write Arminianism, and may imprison, deprive, confine, cut the ears, and slit the noses, and burn the faces of those who speak and preach and write the truth of God; and may send armies of cut-throats, Irish rebels, and other papists and malignant atheists, to destroy and murder the judges of the land, and innocent defenders of the reformed religion, etc." "...to destroy his subjects, subvert religion, arm Papists, who have slaughtered above two hundred thousand innocent Protestants, only for the profession of that true religion which the king has sworn to maintain." *Lex Rex*, pp. 120-21 & 145.

Rutherford says the grounds of deposition "must be such a breach, upon supposition whereof the people would not have given the crown, but upon supposition of his destructiveness to the commonwealth they would never have given to him the crown." *Lex Rex*, p. 58 (lt col). Yet Charles II had more nation-wide consent than Cromwell before him and was more popular than his brother, James II, who reigned after him.

²⁷⁹ The Society People (or Cameronians) through the 1680's ranged in the thousands: ed. Michael Shields, *Faithful Contendings Displayed, being a Historical Relation of the State & Actings of the Suffering Remnant of the Church of Scotland who Subsisted in Select Societies...* 1681-1691 (Glasgow: Bryce, 1780), pp. 429 & 433; Alexander Shields speaks of "many thousands" throughout *A Short Memorial of the Sufferings & Grievances Past & Present of the Presbyterians in Scotland, Particularly of them called by Nick-Name Cameronians* (Edinburgh, 1690), though he may be counting persons besides the Cameronians. The Reformed Presbyterian historian Glasgow spoke of "thousands": W. Melancthon Glasgow, *History of the Reformed Presbyterian Church in America...* (1888), p. 44. "According to Gordon of Earlston, in 1683, membership stood at 7000 men, plus at least the same number of women. At the Revolution the Societies could muster 9000 men on Douglas Moor, and could have called on that many again, if needed." James A.

In 1689 at the Glorious Revolution, the national civil body of Scotland declared the then king, James II (a professed papist, who had fled) to have “forfeited the right to the crown, and the throne is become vacant,”²⁸⁰ due in part to his trampling fundamental laws of the kingdom. Those sympathetic with the Cameronian cause, such as numerous Reformed Presbyterian writers, often interpret this to be a vindication of the Cameronians (or their principles) in 1680.²⁸¹ Rather the Glorious Revolution of 1689 vindicated the political theology of the Westminster era (and previous) puritans and covenanters,²⁸² as well as the position on this point of the majority of the continuing non-conforming ministers outside the Scottish establishment.²⁸³

As the puritan political tradition was summed up and delineated by Rutherford, while a material tyrant with grounds for deposition may continue for a long time, he formally remains the valid, civil, God-recognized ruler, continuing to bear God’s authority in all lawful things, until the consent of the community (which had been given to him, legitimizing him as their ruler) is removed from him, normally²⁸⁴ by the publicly recognized and accepted civil procedure (that is, by the official bodies and in due order).

Dickson, *Ministers & Congregations of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Scotland, 1680–2016, A fasti* (Kilsyth, Scotland: Blue Banner Productions, 2016), pp. xv. In the early 1690’s Hutchison speaks of “a community of many hundreds, it may be thousands of families.” Matthew Hutchison, *The Reformed Presbyterian Church in Scotland, its Origin & History, 1680–1876* (Paisley: Parlane, 1893), p. 126. The nation of Scotland during that decade had around a million people. Hence the Cameronians made up around 1% of the population.

²⁸⁰ William M. Hetherington, *History of the Church of Scotland* (Edinburgh: Johnstone, 1842), pp. 537–38.

²⁸¹ Johannes Vos, *Scottish Covenanters*, pp. 138–39 & 157–58; J.D. Douglas in Cameron, *Dictionary*, “Sanquhar Declaration”, 745; Glasgow, *History*, p. 44; David Steele, “History of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America (General Synod)” in *Journal of the Presbyterian Historical Society* (1901–1930), vol. 1, no. 1 (May, 1901), p. 42.

²⁸² See Rutherford’s quotes in footnote 270 above. James Stewart (1635–1713) of Goodtrees’s works (1667; 1669; 1672), in vindication of the armed rising of field-covenanters (1666), had a radical element to them, a halfway point to the later Cameronian political theology. Jamie M. McDougall: “[Neil] McIntyre... argues that despite claiming to be the successor of Covenanting thought from the Reformation onwards, the subversive ideology advocated by Stewart stemmed from 1648 and was a significant departure from the political creed of Samuel Rutherford.” *Covenants & Covenanters in Scotland 1638–1679*, PhD thesis (University of Glasgow, 2017), pp. 175–76; Neil McIntyre, *Saints & Subverters: The Later Covenanters in Scotland c. 1648–1682*, PhD thesis (University of Strathclyde, 2016), pp. 25, 73–74, 84, 87–88, 90.

²⁸³ M’Crie, *Story of the Scottish Church*, p. 335; Wodrow, *History*, 3.91 (rt col) & 93 (rt col).

²⁸⁴ In more extreme situations where the accepted civil procedures cannot be utilized, a ruler may fundamentally lose the people’s general consent as being their ruler, and thus cease to be such, he only treading over them as a tyrant by violence against their will, yet this would involve the will of the whole community.

As Charles II had the consent of the Scottish nation in the 1660's to rule,²⁸⁵ the conforming ministers desired "the protection of lawful authority the excellent ordinance of God... to us most dear and precious... and to demean ourselves towards lawful authority..."²⁸⁶ Our puritan authors below will be arguing, going a bit further than these explicit words, that it ought not to be only a matter of tolerable suffering for the Church to cooperate with the magistracy in such circumstances, but, especially with a Christian government, it is Biblical, natural, right and desirable to do so.²⁸⁷

²⁸⁵ McDougall: "Contemporaries agree that Charles' return in 1660 was met in Scotland with widespread enthusiasm. It was not until the Erastian Episcopalian settlement that dissent became noticeable." *Covenants & Covenanters*, p. 151.

²⁸⁶ Wodrow, *History*, 2.133.

²⁸⁷ Zanchi: "Because, whereas the ministers are willing to reform abuses, and the magistrate is peremptory and resolute not to reform for some reasons of policy, the minister in that case is not to leave his ministry or to trouble the Church *intempestivis clamoribus* [with unseasonable clamors], or to contest or contend with the magistrate: The reason is, because this course tends to the overthrow of the Church and is opposite to that charity which he owes unto Christ and to his Church, out of which ground and rule he ought to preach and to hold on in the course of his ministry. He ought indeed to teach publicly and privately (as the matter requires) what is to be done, but this he must perform without sedition and troubling of the Church, but peaceably and discreetly. Charity will inform the pastor, if he love the Church indeed, how he ought in these cases to behave himself;" *Commentaries on the Epistles of the Divine Apostle Paul to the Philippians, Colossians, Thessalonians* (Neustadt: Harnisius, 1595), on Phil. 1, fol. 45, as trans. by Sprint, *Cassander Anglicanus, 'Reformed Practices'*, p. 166.

Vilant: "To refuse the peaceable public exercise of the ministry and to choose and prefer an unpeaceable exercise of the ministry unto the peaceable exercise of it, and to choose a way of preaching upon that account that it's contrary unto the magistrate's will, as if the magistrate's appointment or permission to preach were inconsistent with Christ's call, as the author [Wamphray] states the question, p. 129, are so far from being right means of defeating Erastianism that they are rather means to harden Erastians; for to oppose that power which the magistrate has from God, as if that were an Erastian power, confirms Erastians that they who oppose Erastianism that way oppose the ordinance of God; and they who refuse to take the peaceable public exercise of their ministry under the protection of lawful authority, but will preach contrary to the magistrate's will, need not to think it strange if the magistrate think and say that such ways and principles as these which lead men to an unnecessary, unpeaceable thwarting with the magistrate are opposite to civil authority and lawful peace, and so are not of God who is the God of order and peace."

"Some things are necessary because God has made them useful and convenient for man, and has given them to man for his use; they are in their nature convenient for man, given and designed of God for the good of man; thus meat and clothing, and houses, peace and the protection of lawful authority are necessary."

"Now 1. seeing God has ordained magistracy for protection of his servants and people, and for protecting them in the exercise of his worship, it was expedient and necessary to accept of this protection when offered, and not to refuse it; for the acceptance of the effect and product of the exercise of that authority which is God's ordinance was an acknowledgment and owning the ordinance of God; a honoring of those to whom by divine appointment honor is due. And this was a contributing to render the ordinance of God effectual for that end for which he had instituted and ordained it; and upon the contrary, the

Baxter argued persuasively in detail in this era in England that it may be moral and for the greater good (and even necessary) to tolerate receding to a lesser state of past reformation for a time and in the circumstances while the previous or a greater reformation cannot be sustained or made without greater harm than good. [Samuel Bolton](#) (a Westminster divine) and other puritans concurred.²⁸⁸ Anyone experienced in Church government will agree.

What becomes objectionable to many though, is the suggestion that the Church might recede to a lesser external reformation in Church government for condescension to civil peace and the civil government. Yet Paul said, “If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men” ([Rom. 12:18](#)) and the words of the Scottish Aberdeen doctors have substantial merit:

“we most heartily wish any disease of this Church to be timeously prevented and cured. But withal we wish this to be done without a rupture, and such a dangerous division... which in itself is a sore disease, and from which in holy Scripture we are often and very earnestly dehorted.”²⁸⁹

refusing of this relaxation and of the protection of lawful authority would have been a slighting and despising of the ordinance of God and a doing of that which tended to render the ordinance of God ineffectual for that end and use for which God ordained it. Now the relaxation of this restraint which had been long upon the public exercise of their ministry and the protection of lawful authority which Mr. Hutcheson accepted of was the very exercise of that authority which is the ordinance of God.”

“The many disorders and confusions and sad sufferings, the imprisonments and finings, and banishments, and the great effusion of the blood of the people of God, which have followed upon the hostile clashings betwixt magistrates and people, may teach us how necessary the peaceable exercise of the ministry under lawful authority is, and how necessary it is to take and seek, and follow after peace with all men, especially with the magistrate...”

“The peaceable, fixed, settled preaching and hearing of the Gospel is a very desirable end; and the acceptance of the protection of civil authority is necessary in order to this end;” [Review & Examination](#), pp. 214–15, 249, 250–51, 254 & 265–66.

Baxter: “But those [leading presbyterian and congregationalist ministers] that were called by the king, and one another, 1660 and 1661, to treat of concord, and that assembled at Sion College, and elsewhere about it, did openly make known their minds... XXXIX. We are so far from desiring to draw people from the parish Churches into conventicles that we would keep up the honor of them to the utmost of our power, as knowing how greatly the countenance and maintenance of rulers conduces to the furtherance of religion; and that the public religion will be the common and national religion; and most will be there...” *English Nonconformity*, [ch. 3](#), pp. 11 & 15–16.

²⁸⁸ See ‘[Richard Baxter – Reformation & Conformity](#)’ under the section ‘Principles of Union & Separation about Church Assemblies with Impurities of Worship in Them’ at ‘On Impurities in Worship’ (RBO).

²⁸⁹ Edward Dering: “I have never... broken the peace of the Church neither for cap nor surplice, for archbishop nor bishop... I have complained of Papists... I have said this courtly apparel is not meet for such as should be more sober.” Lake, *Moderate Puritans*, [p. 19](#).

Dionysius [†264], Bishop of Alexandria, in his epistle to Novatus, recorded by Eusebius, *Histories*, bk. 6, [ch. 45](#), worthily says:

‘You ought rather to have suffered anything whatsoever for avoiding of cutting asunder the Kirk of God: and martyrdom for keeping the Kirk from schism is no less glorious than which is suffered for not committing idolatry. And in my opinion also it is greater: for in suffering martyrdom for not committing idolatry, a man suffers for one, even for his own soul; but here a man suffers martyrdom for the whole Kirk.’”²⁹⁰

It is a bit more difficult to prove the necessity of always being at odds and in strife with the magistrate’s sword, *ad nauseum*, especially under a Christian government.²⁹¹ Civil peace was the reason the Scottish parliament rescinded the previous decades of puritan legislation in 1661, the nation, unjustly or not, blaming the previous civil wars on the reforming puritan movement.²⁹²

²⁹⁰ *Duplies of the Ministers & Professors of Aberdeen to Second Answers of some Reverend Brethren, concerning the Late [National] Covenant* (Aberdeen: Raban, 1638), “[First Duply](#)”, p. 11. The words occurred in a bit different context.

²⁹¹ At 1662 in Scotland “So [James] Sharp returns to the Aberdeen Doctors and their belief that the king was to be obeyed in non-fundamentals such as church government.” Julia Buckroyd, *The Life of James Sharp Archbishop of St Andrews 1618–1679: a Political Biography* (Edinburgh: John Donald Publishers, 1987), [p. 76](#).

²⁹² This was Baxter’s viewpoint, which also regarded the English Parliament’s strictness in the Act of Uniformity in 1662 for the Church of England, so that the reform movement would be definitively put to an end, though I cannot find the most pertinent quotes. The bishops at the [Savoy Conference](#) (1661): “This experience of former and latter times has taught us, when the Liturgy was duly observed, we lived in peace; since that was laid aside, there has been as many modes and fashions of public worship as fancies, we have had continual dissention... whence we conceive there is no such way to the preservation of peace as for all to return to the strict use and practice of the form.” Baxter, *The Grand Debate between the most reverend Bishops & the Presbyterian Divines appointed by His Sacred Majesty as Commissioners for the Review & Alteration of the Book of Common Prayer...* (London, 1661), ‘[The Papers](#)’, p. 39.

Baxter: “Objection V. They say that you [non-conformists] took part with the parliament against the king and involved the land in blood, and have still the same rebellious principles... Objection VI. But they say that these non-conformists, though they had no hand in the late war, yet have the same principles that caused it, and that is, non-conformity.” *English Nonconformity*, [ch. 57](#), pp. 215–16.

“As to the late civil wars which some most loudly charge on the non-conformists, this is the truth, that the several parties charge the beginning of that war on one another...” *The Nonconformists’ Plea for Peace* (London: Alsop, 1679), [§7](#), p. 137.

“Lawyer: Sir, the danger of the king’s dominions by our irreligious contentions about religion, possesses the observers with just indignation; but all know not on whom to lay the blame; some lay it on the bishops, and some on the non-conformists, and some on both...” *English Nonconformity*, [ch. 1](#), p. 1.

Imposed Erastianism & Episcopacy

In the first years of King Charles II's reign in the early-1660's his government set up a relatively low form of episcopal Church government involving bishops and archbishops in both England and Scotland, with himself as the "only supreme governor of this kingdom, over all persons, and in all causes," which causes included, as unfolded in 1669, "all causes ecclesiastical"²⁹³ (this involving what is known as Erastianism).²⁹⁴ On the Scottish side, the national covenants were civilly abjured by parliament (with the king's subsequent approval) and the right of installing ministers was civilly taken away from presbyteries.²⁹⁵ In a note of moderation, the enforcement of the ceremonies that Gillespie had controverted and the offensive episcopal canons and Service-book for worship that had spurred the Second Reformation (1638) were abandoned.²⁹⁶

The equivalent to the Great Ejection in Scotland in 1662 required a great amount less of the ministers than on the English side. No oaths or subscribing were mandatory, but every minister who had entered the ministry after 1649 was to (1) "obtain presentation," or sanction from the patron (a local or regional civil officer), and (2) "have collation," or confer with the regional bishop. About 20% of the Scottish ministry had entered before 1649,²⁹⁷ when patronage was still current, before it was abolished. Many of those Scottish ministers during the Second Reformation (1638) and Westminster era had complied with patronage. Collation with a bishop "usually meant taking an oath: either... the oath of canonical obedience, or another oath drawn up by the kirk session or the presbytery."²⁹⁸ The oath of canonical obedience promised "canonical obedience in all things lawful and

²⁹³ Vos, *Scottish Covenanters*, pp. 78 & 82.

²⁹⁴ It is possible the mere phrase need not be Erastian, as puritans regularly interpreted it from the beginning years of Queen Elizabeth's reign. William Bradshaw, *English Puritanism...* (London: 1641), ch. 6, p. 19. London Provincial Assembly: "We say that the magistrate is, in a civil notion, the supreme governor in all causes ecclesiastical;" *Vindication of Presbyterian Government*, p. 7. See Baxter argue this and Turretin argue from sources that the English king being called the "Head of the Church" and the "sole, supreme governor" ought to be taken in a way consistent with *circa sacra* at 'On Oath of Supremacy, 1661' at 'Erastianism' (RBO). However, the 1669 Assertory Act which specified "all causes ecclesiastical" also stipulated this Erastian tenet: "the ordering and disposal of the external government and policy of the Church doth properly belong to his Majesty..." Wodrow, *History*, 2.137.

²⁹⁵ Vos, *Scottish Covenanters*, pp. 79-80.

²⁹⁶ Cameron, *Dictionary*, "Restoration", p. 711.

²⁹⁷ McDougall, *Covenants & Covenanters*, p. 146.

²⁹⁸ McDougall, *Covenants & Covenanters*, p. 143.

honest to the bishop.” That phrase, of things “lawful and honest,” remained undefined and was left open to interpretation.²⁹⁹

Any minister not having obtained these two requirements was forbidden to preach and was to remove from his parish’s bounds by the given date.³⁰⁰ Around 270 ministers (or more), about 30% of the ministry, did not comply with these two requisites and were therein civilly deprived.³⁰¹ The following year all preaching without the bishop’s permission, that is in homes and other assemblies (as many outed ministers had been doing), was prohibited under fines. These fines and penalties increased as the years went on, turning into imprisonment and death. In considering these issues, note that many of the puritans had previously taught that keeping the moral Sixth Commandment and preserving one’s life overrides the keeping of positive Church ordinances.³⁰² Baxter asked: “Do your brethren in prison enjoy public worship?”³⁰³ or, one might add, unconstrained presbyteries?

²⁹⁹ Conforming divines often took “lawful” to mean anything not inherently immoral in all circumstances, however inconvenient and burdensome in those particular circumstances. Hardline non-conformists often took “lawful” as the pure, ideal, revealed will of God, considered apart from human authority, and “unlawful” to be any deviation therefrom. This sheds light on the remarkable unifying ambiguity of the phrasing of WLC on the 5th Commandment (#127), that “inferiors owe to their superiors... willing obedience to their lawful commands,” while the Catechism says nothing about submission or obedience to superiors’ unlawful commands.

³⁰⁰ Vos, *Scottish Covenanters*, p. 84; Cameron, *Dictionary*, p. 711. See the original act in Wodrow, *History*, 1.282–83.

³⁰¹ Cameron, *Dictionary*, p. 711.

³⁰² See ‘On Holding & Attending Public Worship under a High Risk of Severe Persecution’, ‘In a Time of Danger & Spreading Disease’ and ‘On Self-Care & Upkeep as a Legitimate Reason for Missing Public Worship & Church Activities’ at ‘On Works of Necessity & Mercy on the Sabbath’ (RBO), as well as, ‘On the Relations Between the 1st & 2nd Tables of the Law’ (RBO). This position, under enough danger, ended up being the practiced view of the majority of the continuing outed non-conformist ministers by 1679–1680, and even of Richard Cameron, who, though he returned to Scotland at that time and began field preaching, yet did so in the outer lying parts where he and the people could do so with relative safety: Maurice Grant, *The Lion of the Covenant: the Story of Richard Cameron* (Evangelical Press, 1997), pp. 175–76.

³⁰³ Baxter, *Catholic Communion Doubly Defended*, section 5, p. 33. “Though we must prefer better before worse, that worse may be best to us at that time and place when we cannot have better without more hurt than benefit to the public or ourselves. Among many ministers, weak and strong, all cannot hear the best, nor must renounce the weaker. To live under the countenance of government under an honest minister of mean parts in peace and concord, though he use the liturgy, is more to the common advantage of religion and to the profit of most particular souls than to hear an abler man with the distraction of disturbers and to be fined and lie in prison on no better a cause.” *Ibid.*, section 2, p. 10.

Our English authors below will make the case for, under necessity, material cooperation with bishops,³⁰⁴ taking the oath of canonical obedience³⁰⁵ and yielding to civil patrons in the presentation of ministers to congregations (or patronage).³⁰⁶ Note that conferring with a bishop and getting the consent and recognition of a civil officer to one's ministry³⁰⁷ are not inherently sinful actions. To give further perspective to this, and what is to come, it will be proven in the next section that Church government (albeit of divine law) is not moral law, but is secondary.

³⁰⁴ See 'On Material Cooperation with Bishops' at 'On Prelacy & Episcopacy' (RBO) and 'On Serving, or Holding Office under, Prevalent Usurpers' at 'On the Ethics of being under Usurped Powers' (RBO).

³⁰⁵ Honyman: "'if Timorcus [who argued the continuing obligation of the covenants] (p. 37) may be believed (and he seems tender in the matter of others) there is no contradiction between the canonical oath and the Covenant; he maintains, that the [Scottish] ministers who of old [in the early-1600's] took the canonical oath, did not swear the contradictory thereto when they took the Covenant: whence it will follow necessarily that they who have taken the Covenant do not contradict that oath, if they should take the oath of canonical obedience:" *Seasonable Case*, p. 15. See also 'May One take an Oath of Allegiance or Otherwise to a Usurper? [Yes]' at 'On the Ethics of being under Usurped Powers' (RBO).

³⁰⁶ See the Genevan ministers, the leading presbyterian and Independent ministers at the *Savoy Conference* (1661), including nine Westminster divines, Baxter and Philip Henry teach 'On Compliance with, or a Tolerable Submission to Practices of Erastianism where Possible or under Necessity' at 'Erastianism' (RBO). Also see 'On Serving, or Holding Office under, Prevalent Usurpers' at 'On the Ethics of being under Usurped Powers' (RBO) and 'Was Patronage in Some Respect Theoretically Tolerable, at least for a Time?' at 'Patronage' (RBO).

³⁰⁷ Note that having the recognition and approval of the civil government, though it ought to be secondary and consequential rather than primary and immediate, is involved in the Biblical doctrine of *circa sacra* and of itself is a good thing. On the proper order see Fentiman, *Circa Sacra*, pp. 49–51. Bairdie poses the question: "Whether it be altogether heterogeneous and incompetent, as well as it may be inconvenient, for the ruler to make civil laws and constitutions about the circumstances, order, and exercise of matters of religion, without the previous cognizance and pre-determination of the Church thereupon, and that even in the most broken and ruined state of the Church when there is no governing-Church existent that can be owned." *Balm from Gilead*, pp. 76–77. The answer, at least in the abstract, must be that such an exercise of civil power, however inconvenient and defective in some cases, is not always incompetent and invalid in itself.

Church Government is Secondary

The Reformed³⁰⁸ and nearly the whole Christian Church, except for certain early-Church sects,³⁰⁹ Romanism³¹⁰ and some others, have understood Church government to be of secondary ethical weight. This is because, while faith, hope and love (1 Cor. 13),³¹¹ internal worship³¹² and moral obedience to God flow from the First Commandment,³¹³ Church government and outward rites (1) are positive³¹⁴ in nature, above nature's law, and give way to it when they conflict,³¹⁵ and (2) they derive from the Second Commandment.³¹⁶ Church government, and all that flows out of it, including public worship ordinances: (1) involve human choices and specifications of details (in the here and now, in this place and time, not others, by this person, not another, etc.) and (2) are dependent on and limited by conducive circumstances (so far and not further, while it may be had, etc.) for the edification and well-being of the Church (1 Cor. 14:26, 40; Eph. 4:11-13). In addition, Church government could have never been revealed or instituted by God and could have been instituted otherwise. Yet, given Creation being made the

³⁰⁸ See 'Church Government is a Secondary Teaching of Christianity & of Secondary Weight' at 'Of Fundamental, Secondary & Tertiary Matters of Christianity...' (RBO).

³⁰⁹ Such as the Donatists and Luciferians.

³¹⁰ Turretin: "For although the controversies concerning the church are not among the first (which occasioned our secession from the Roman Church), but only among the secondary (which sprung from the others); inasmuch as the Romanists (distrusting the goodness of their cause in other heads of doctrine) have betaken themselves to the authority of the church that they might be the more safely concealed under her shield, still in the progress of time they have become the principal matter in which our opponents seem to place the strength of their cause." *Institutes*, 3.1.

³¹¹ Robert Fleming, Sr. speaking about differences regarding the Indulgence: "[A pretended ground of division:] 1. These strange intestine conflicts and differences in judgment that we are now in the Church and among professors of the truth as though they were not the children of the same house. For answer:... 2. It is must clear that one of the greatest of the laws of God to which with the furthest reiterate enforcements our obedience is required for preventing the Churches hazard on this rock, is that law of charity and love for the godly amongst themselves, so as without this He will accept no man's service, 1 Cor. 13, and is such the apostle presses, above all things to put on charity; which is the bond of perfection, Col. 3:13-14. 3. I hope it is undeniable also that these principles of union and love are so firmly fixed, as might be consistent both with some various apprehensions and difference in judgment amongst his people here, who are unite[d] in Himself and in the great concerns of truth and godliness..." *The Church Wounded & Rent by a Spirit of Division held forth in a Short Account of some Sad Differences has been of Late in the Church of Scotland* (1681), §4, pp. 29-30.

³¹² See 'On Internal & External Worship' (RBO).

³¹³ See 'On the First Commandment' (RBO).

³¹⁴ See 'On Positive Laws & Ordinances' (RBO).

³¹⁵ See 'Natural Law, in Necessity, Over-Rules Positive Law when They Conflict' at 'On Positive Laws & Ordinances' (RBO).

³¹⁶ These points maybe confirmed from reformed commentaries at 'On the 1st Commandment' and 'On the 2nd Commandment', both at RBO.

way it is, faith, hope, love, internal worship and moral obedience to God cannot but be universally binding, irrespective of circumstances.

[Westminster Larger Catechism](#) 99.5 rightly distinguishes aspects of moral obligation and teaches that some particular duties need not be done at all times:

“what God forbids, is at no time to be done ([Job 13:7–8](#); [Rom. 3:8](#); [Job 36:21](#); [Heb. 11:25](#)); what he commands, is always our duty ([Dt. 4:8–9](#)); and yet every particular duty is not to be done at all times ([Mt. 12:7](#)).”

Thus, while we are never to transgress God’s moral law, we are not obliged to positively do every particular duty, such as enacting and keeping ideal Church government, “at all times.”³¹⁷ Accordingly, abstaining from enacting and keeping ideal, external Church government in certain circumstances does not inherently entail sin when such cannot consist with other more fundamental priorities that take precedence and as Christ’s internal moral government of his Church by his Word and Spirit may yet flourish.

Consequently, Church government, by the Word, which defines it, can never arise higher than bearing secondary weight or ever override more fundamental obligations, no matter what is enacted in Church or civil constitutions, oaths, covenants, etc.,³¹⁸ lest we go beyond the Word ([1 Cor. 4:6](#))³¹⁹ and become sectarian (all in the name of reforming). Ideal, external Church government is a goal to be worked towards, but it does not

³¹⁷ Fleming on differences about the Indulgence: “present duty with a due respect and balancing of circumstances: and to see that the same way at all times is not to be followed in our practice, since what may be most requisite and edifying some time and in one case, may be destructive in another; for this has the Holy Ghost showed, that all things are lawful but not expedient, [1 Cor. 10:23](#).” *Church Wounded*, §4, p. 32.

³¹⁸ Such constitutions, etc. might be deferred to for the time, place and circumstances, out of the secondary good of order, till they can be changed, but such laws can never ultimately compete with the Word of God’s authority.

³¹⁹ See ‘[All Vows are Qualified](#)’ and ‘[Vows can Never Bind Beyond God’s Law](#)’ at ‘On Oaths & Vows’ (RBO).

necessitate or warrant of itself separation³²⁰ (see this proved from Scripture in regard to things much worse than episcopacy).³²¹

Many of the Scottish ministers who conformed in 1662 were divine-right presbyterians who thought it not inherently wrong to practice presbyterianism as accommodated to and limited in certain ways by bishops and civil authority.³²² “Divine-right” in the name does not mean something must be done immediately upon God’s absolute authority, now, overriding all other factors, but that it is the form of Church government Scripture teaches, for when it may be profitably had. Our puritan authors will greatly expand on presbyterian government being a goal, yet not a cause, in itself, of separation from other Christians. The 70% or so of the Scottish ministry which conformed in 1662 were much of the same mind as the earlier English partial-conformist puritan minister [George Gifford](#), who wrote against the Separatists in the 1590’s:

“if this Christian prince do err in some matters of doctrine, or touching the rules of discipline, yet holding and maintaining all the fundamental points of the Christian faith, so that there be abuses and corruptions in the Church, every private godly man is to keep a good conscience, not breaking the unity and peace of the faithful, but not to take public authority to reform.”³²³

In such a context indulged ministers later advised for pastoral ministry:

³²⁰ Fleming regarding differences about the Indulgence: “Nor is there cause to fear any breach from the most serious and fervent contending for the truth and close adherence thereto, which should be dearer to us than our life and can admit no latitude or ceding there when the revealed rule of our duty herein is observed, that this be managed with a humble, tender condescendence and ceding in our own things to one another... It were well if such a blest contending and striving lawfully as the apostle shows were thus studied, that it be in the way of the Lord and by means of his own appointment; by pureness, by long suffering, by the word of truth, by the armor of God on the right hand and on the left etc. And where these are not men’s study and practice they must live in an express contradiction to these principles which yet they dare not disown...” *Church Wounded*, §4, p. 30.

³²¹ See Fentiman, “Editor’s Introduction” in Baxter, [On Worship & Catholicity](#), p. 8.

³²² “They had wanted to retain Presbyterianism, but many were ready to accept moderate episcopacy.” Cameron, *Dictionary*, p. 711.

³²³ Gifford, [Short Treatise](#), p. 105. Gifford’s respect for the Church’s unity and conscience, even of those with whom he disagreed, was evident in his writing against Barrow and Greenwood: “For the controversy between the bishops and the presbyteries is whether of them by God’s Word, and for the benefit of the Church are to exercise that power which Christ has left unto her. The one side does affirm that by God’s Word the execution of this her power does belong to the bishops, as being most properly the apostles’ successors... The churches which hold the other government, do affirm that when our Savior says, ‘Tell the Church,’ it is not meant, ‘Tell the bishop, or those which are joined with them:’ but ‘Tell the Church,’ is ‘Tell the consistory,’ which consists of pastors, teachers and elders chosen from among the people. This consistory (say they) is to have and to exercise that power and jurisdiction which the bishops do hold.” [Short Reply](#), p. 69.

"Make it rather your work to edify them in the substantial of religion and vitals of piety [[Rom. 14:17](#)], such as faith and repentance, humility, sobriety, mortification, self-denial, love and new obedience, etc. How much better were it to fire their hearts with the love of God and man than to heat their heads with puzzling debates..."³²⁴

Ministers Accepting the Civil Indulgence

By 1669 the king issued an indulgence³²⁵ to certain chosen, deprived Scottish ministers who had "lived peaceably and orderly." They were civilly "appointed"³²⁶ to resume their parish ministries without needing to "have collation" with a bishop, nor "obtain presentation" to a congregation by a civil patron, nor take any oath or subscriptions; yet the indulged would be enjoined with several material restrictions.³²⁷

³²⁴ Bairdie, [Balm from Gilead](#), p. 154.

³²⁵ For the full text see Wodrow, *History*, 2.132.

³²⁶ Vilant: "when there is need, the magistrate may command and compel ministers to do the work of their office, as appears from the Books of Discipline of the Church of Scotland." [Review & Examination](#), p. 15.

Scottish First Book of Discipline (1560), [4th Head](#): "your honors, with consent of the kirk, are bound by your authority to compel such men as have gifts and graces able to edify the kirk of God, that they bestow them where greatest necessity shall be known. For no man may be permitted to live idle, or as himself list, but must be appointed to travail where your wisdoms and the kirk shall think expedient. We cannot prescribe unto your honors certain rule how that ye shall distribute the ministers and learned men whom God has already sent unto you... And therefore of your honors we require, in God's name, that by your authority which ye have of God, ye compel all men to whom God has given any talent to persuade, by wholesome doctrine, to bestow the same, if they are called by the kirk to the advancement of Christ's glory, and to the comfort of his troubled flock; and that ye, with the consent of the kirk, assign unto your chiefest workmen, not only towns to remain into, but also provinces, that by their faithful labors kirks may be erected, and order established, where none is now. And if on this manner ye will use your power and authority, chiefly seeking God's glory, and the comfort of your brethren, we doubt not but God shall bless you and your enterprises."

[5th Head](#): "we desire nothing more earnestly, than that Christ Jesus be universally once preached throughout this realm; which shall not suddenly be unless that, by you, men are appointed and compelled faithfully to travail in such provinces as to them shall be assigned."

For a close analysis of how the magistrate's power *circa sacra* (around sacred things) was involved in the indulgences to a large extent legitimately (however erroneous in certain aspects; see pp. 53–54), see Bairdie, [Balm from Gilead](#), pp. 26–40. Bairdie: "surely this act of licensing them to preach in such and such places is no proper, formal, intrinsic act of the power of the keys [of the kingdom of heaven] (no more than the Roman governor's permitting of Paul to preach, [Acts 21:39–40 & 26:1](#)), but rather an act of the regal scepter, and is only objectively ecclesiastical..." [Balm from Gilead](#), p. 51.

³²⁷ The ministers were to (1) "keep kirk-sessions, and keep presbyteries and synods, as was done by all the ministers before the year 1638," under bishops. God-fearing ministers at times would withdraw from these courts, whether out of conscience, protest, depression or otherwise. If a presbytery sends a

The most notable was that the minister was to be confined to his own parish if he did not attend presbyteries under a bishop (as many godly, partial-conforming ministers had done in the past out of protest, disgust or partial-separation). In the end, forty-two ministers received the first Scottish indulgence,³²⁸ including the Westminster divine [Robert Douglas](#) (who believed in the continuing obligation of the covenants and turned down a bishopric).³²⁹ Three more indulgences would come in 1672, 1679 and 1687³³⁰ before the era ended in 1689. The general trajectory was for the indulgences to progressively offer greater liberty and less restrictions.

For the ejected ministers taking the indulgence that did abide by these material restrictions, the principle at hand is akin to whether a man, having been immorally chained and imprisoned, might instead accept from the civil authority to be put on house arrest with a much greater measure of liberty.³³¹ Would you decline? The apostle Paul, immorally chained and imprisoned, did not ([Acts 21:33; 22:24–30; 23:10, 35; 24:1](#)), but used the Erastian magistrate's permission on house arrest to be busy about "preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ" ([Acts 24:23–25; 28:23–24, 30–31](#)).

When Jeremiah was loosed from his chains by the favor of Nebuchadnezzar ([Jer. 39:11–12; 40:4](#)), who had burnt the House of God ([2 Kn. 25:9](#)) and enslaved the Church in her broken and declining state, Jeremiah took provision from Nebuchadnezzar ([Jer. 39:12](#);

command to a session to do something, if the session never meets, it never receives the command. (2) Such as did not keep presbyteries "shall be confined within the bounds of the parishes where they preach," so as to prevent them travelling and stirring up dissatisfaction with the bishops. (3) They also were not to admit persons of other parishes to their Lord's Supper, nor baptize or marry them without the allowance of their parish's minister, nor "countenance" such others coming for their preaching. While these restrictions might seem to keep up due order, they also prevented the abandoning of formalist preachers, revivals and the growing popularity of those most hot for enacting exclusive presbyterianism. Some writers have thought there were more (serious) restrictions, but they are mistaken; see [footnote 400](#) below.

³²⁸ Cameron, *Dictionary*, p. 429.

³²⁹ Buckroyd, *Life of James Sharp*, pp. 53 & 72–73. Douglas had been the moderator of the general assembly of the Church of Scotland five times (the only person to have attained this honor), had officiated and preached at the coronation of King Charles II in 1651, administered the king's oath to the National Covenant and [SL&C](#) at that time, and had been a prominent leader for the Resolutioners in negotiations leading up to the Restoration.

³³⁰ For the original: Wodrow, *History*, 4.417–19.

³³¹ Some indulged ministers "argued that this acceptance was merely embracing the liberty to preach, which belonged to them of right, and no more implied a recognition of the supremacy claimed by the civil powers who granted it, than a prisoner's walking out of his cell to the liberty of which he had been unjustly deprived, implied an acknowledgement of the authority by which he had been imprisoned." M'Crie, *Story of the Scottish Church*, p. 302. See '[On Serving, or Holding Office under, Prevalent Usurpers](#)' at '[On the Ethics of being under Usurped Powers](#)' (RBO).

40:5-7) and decided upon his permission and legal protection to dwell in Judah (Jer. 40:5-7) under the restrictions of, and serving the anti-presbyterian, Babylonian rule (Jer. 40:8-9) for the benefits that accrued from it (Jer. 40:10-12).³³² Even an imprisoned, longtime Scottish non-conformist, John Spreul eventually walked out of the opened prison doors in 1687, even when he acknowledged the granted liberty at the time of the fourth indulgence “appeared inconsistent with the truths he was suffering for.”³³³

The even more basic principle involved is whether a minister may give up some liberty for a time, even indefinitely, for the furthering of Christ’s ministry, even for its long-term survival (Isa. 26:20)³³⁴ or the eternal well-being of souls (Col. 1:24)?³³⁵ Besides Jesus’s example and teaching in a broken and declining Church, Mt. 17:24-27; 26:51-54; Lk. 9:51; 22:43; 23:35-37; Jn. 10:17-18; Gal. 4:4-5; Phil. 2:8, see that of Paul often under the same state, Acts 16:3-4; 21:13, 23-26; 1 Cor. 4:11-12; 8:13; 9:12, 19-23; 2 Cor. 6:3-10; 11:23-28; Gal. 5:13; Phil. 1:12-14; 2 Tim. 2:9-10; 2 Thess. 3:8-9. Or is this principle sinful? If a person has liberty to amputate their own bodily extremities in some needful circumstances for the greater good of the whole³³⁶ (Mt. 18:8-9), from the greater to the lesser, may not one give up some of their bodily liberty for a greater good? Is not fleeing persecution (such as would occur in continuing to publicly preach against the magistrate’s will), even despite certain restrictions, not only an option, but often morally obliging (Gen. 27:43-44; Ex. 2:15; especially in a broken and declining Church: 1 Kn. 19:2-

³³² So Vilant, *Review & Examination*, pp. 594-95.

³³³ Wodrow: “the council grant the following act of liberation. ‘The lords of his majesty’s privy council, having considered an address made in behalf of John Spreul apothecary in Glasgow, now prisoner in the isle of the Bass [Rock], supplicating for liberty, in regard of his majesty’s late gracious proclamation, do hereby give order and warrant... to set the said John Spreul at liberty...’ When this order comes to the Bass, Mr. Spreul was unwilling to take his liberty upon any terms that to him appeared inconsistent with the truths he was suffering for; and he apprehended this order involved him in an approbation of the proclamation specified, which he was far from approving. So much he signified to the governor of the Bass and continued some time in prison till a letter came over requiring the governor to set open doors to him and tell him he was at liberty to go, or stay, as he pleased. Whereupon, after so long an imprisonment, he chose to come out under a protestation against what he took to be wrong in the orders and proclamation, and went over to Edinburgh, and waited on the counsellors, thanked them for allowing him liberty, and verbally renewed his protest against the proclamation and orders.” *History*, 4.413.

³³⁴ See the historical examples Philip Henry (Mathew Henry’s father) cited to a similar effect in footnote 169. The underground Church across the world acts upon this principle and survives because of it.

³³⁵ Might a Christian chaplain, employed by a pluralistic hospital hostile to orthodox Christianity, forego much liberty to save souls?

³³⁶ If one whose hand is stuck under a bolder may cut it off for the good of one’s person, may not a minister, a part of the Body of Christ, undergo some material restrictions for the good of the whole Body?

3; Prov. 22:3; Jer. 26:20–21; Mt. 2:13–14; 10:23; 24:15–16; Jn. 7:1; 10:39–40; Acts 9:23–25; 14:5–6)?

The indulged ministers who abode by the civil injunctions³³⁷ were willing to trade some temporal restrictions for eternal benefits,³³⁸ at God's call. Rutherford rightly taught that providential necessity (by God's natural light and law) is on par with the written commandments of God:

“God places acts of providential necessity as emergent significations of his approving will, which are so to us in place of a divine commandment of God's revealed will, and these providential acts of necessity do no less oblige us to moral obedience than any of the express written commandments of God.”³³⁹

So far from the indulged simply being out to evade suffering³⁴⁰ or for their own comfort,

³³⁷ See ‘On Occasional, Qualified, Material Communion & Conformity without Sin’ at ‘On Schism & Separatism’ (RBO).

³³⁸ Vilant: “in accepting the liberty of the peaceable exercise of their ministry when the magistrate granted it, they have upon all occasions declared that it was their duty to do what they did and that they could not have had peace in their consciences to have refused to preach the Gospel in these places where they are settled; and several of them have declared this when they saw themselves near to death and judgment, as for example, Mr. Alexander Blare and Mr. Alexander Wedderburne.”

“he should have proven that it is the necessary work of the indulged ministers who have churches to preach in where the meetings of the Lord's people are not disturbed, to leave these churches and go to preach in mountains and needlessly expose themselves to hazard, when they may have the same ordinances of God in the church, and with these advantages, that they have the accommodation of a house to shelter them from storms, that they are rid of the fears of invasion by armed soldiers which do much disorder folks spirits for the worship of God; and the place of meeting being fixed and known, peoples uncertain wandering upon the Lord's Day is prevented. It has been very sad to those who truly designed to sanctify the Sabbath, to wander on the Lord's Day, to seek the Word of God and not find it; and when they had found it, to be in a continual fear of violence; or to be fleeing, or to see some more taken up in drawing themselves up for fighting than for drawing near to God; or to see or hear of blood mingled with sacrifices. He should have proven that God calls the indulged ministers to quit the peaceable exercise of their ministry in these parishes where they are settled; where they have opportunity to know the state, case and way of the people and to apply their doctrine suitably to the people's condition; and where they have opportunity to make full proof of their ministry, in preaching and ministering sacraments, catechizing, visiting, exercising Church-discipline. The indulged ministers are not convinced that it's the greater good of the Church to cast these congregations where they are desolate and leave them to be filled with conformists.” *Review & Examination*, pp. 32–33, 239–40.

The alternative to the indulgence was often that the parish congregations simply had no minister, seen by the very fact that those indulging in 1669 and 1672 often went back to their own congregations they were expelled from in 1662.

³³⁹ Rutherford, *Divine Right*, Appendix, ‘An Introduction to the Doctrine of Scandal’, Question 6, pp. 81–82.

³⁴⁰ Vilant: “Again, there are diverse kinds of suffering; the indulged ministers have had their share of reproaches, which uses to go further than the skin; ‘Reproach’, says David, ‘has broken my heart’ [Ps. 69:20]; reviling speeches are persecutions, Mt. 5:11. Jer. 18:18, they incite one another to devise devices against Jeremiah and to smite him with the tongue.” *Review & Examination*, p. 282.

the Scottish covenanting minister, [Robert Fleming, Sr.](#), who accepted the second indulgence and continued to partially conform and greatly suffered for it after that, said:

“the great aim and concern of the most serious [indulged] non-conformed ministers... under constraint of duty... has been... to show the indispensable need of embracing that blessed offer of reconciliation by Christ: as also to press holiness and give warning of any snare when it is evident the people might be in hazard thereby.”³⁴¹

The indulged ministers put themselves, for Christ, into very difficult circumstances in the establishment, under liability to further confining restrictions and penalties of the king and Church, as Christ lived under. Seeking to navigate this practical situation is what our authors’ book below, and their example, so helpfully guides us in.

Indulged, Non-Conforming Ministers

The indulged ministers did not have to verbally accept or promise to keep the restrictions.³⁴² Rather, in showing up to court as called ([1 Sam. 22:11-12](#)), the act of indulgence was read to them, including “their injunctions” (or restrictions) by the king’s “authority” and “command”.³⁴³ It is very possible the court itself intended the

³⁴¹ Fleming, *Church Wounded*, §4, pp. 38-39.

³⁴² Vilant: “That which the indulged ministers accepted was a freedom from, or a relaxation of, that civil restraint which had hindered the peaceable exercise of their ministry... If he [Wamphray] allege that they accepted of the instructions, etc., this is an acceptation of his own making...” “I suppose in some cases silence will import no consent nor acceptance. Suppose one who has by strong hand bound a man who ought not to have been bound, and tells him he will loose him, and withal when he is loosing him, he commands him to do something which he has no power to command, nor can the man in conscience perform; will any say that because the poor man holds his tongue that therefore he has accepted the condition?... as suppose one who has unjustly bound a man comes and looses him to do something which the man that is loosed has no mind to perform; is he obliged in all cases to tell that he will not do what he commands, when the telling of it will in all appearance provoke the other to keep him still in bonds?” [Review & Examination](#), pp. 129, 158-59.

³⁴³ To give more detail: The privy council did initially choose, “nominate and appoint” the respective ministers to be indulged. The ministers were called to the relevant court in Edinburgh. When they appeared, the clerk read and then gave them severally their individual written acts of indulgence, mainly limited to specifying where they would minister. Then the clerk read the full act of indulgence containing “their injunctions”. It was after this that Hutcheson “craved leave from the council to speak; and being allowed,” gave his speech; Wodrow, *History*, 2.132-33. This is confirmed in that, though numerous historians speak of the indulgence being “offered,” yet at the second indulgence (1672), when Mr. Blair refused it, he said “I can receive no instructions from you for regulating the exercise of my ministry.” Vos, *Scottish Covenanters*, p. 95; Wodrow, *History*, 2.203.

injunctions, though laws, not to be *sine qua non* (“without which nothing”) conditions to the appointment, but extrinsic and subsequent to it.³⁴⁴ Needless to say, showing up at a given place and hearing injunctions read to you (even upon your silence in front of Erastian governors) does not necessarily imply your agreement or consent to them (especially in a broken and declining Church, [Ex. 1:15–17; 10:8–11, 24–27; 1 Kn. 22:13–14; Est. 4:11, 16; Dan. 3:4–12; 6:7–10; Mt. 2:7–12; 27:12–14; Mk. 14:60–61; Acts 4:21; 5:27–28; 5:40–42](#)).

The main objection to accepting the indulgence, raised largely later, was that the ministers seemed, according to some, to approve of episcopacy and the royal supremacy.³⁴⁵ However, the leader of the first ten ministers to receive the first indulgence, George Hutcheson, a celebrated divine and Bible commentator who had turned down a bishopric at the Restoration,³⁴⁶ verbally protested the following at their appearing before the court:³⁴⁷

“We having received our ministry from Jesus Christ, with full prescriptions from Him for regulating us therein, must in the discharge thereof be countable to Him: and as there can be nothing more desirable or refreshing to us upon earth, than to have free liberty of the exercise of our ministry, under the protection of lawful authority, the excellent ordinance of God, and to us most dear and precious;

so we purpose and resolve to behave ourselves in the discharge of the ministry with that wisdom and prudence which becomes faithful ministers of Jesus Christ, and to demean

³⁴⁴ The first indulgence was a separate act from the act containing the injunctions. The injunctions to the second indulgence were only read to some of the ministers some time after they received the indulgence; Wodrow, *History*, 2.216. Bairdie argues the point: [Balm from Gilead](#), pp. 78–80, as does Vilant, [Review & Examination](#), pp. 350–52.

³⁴⁵ The king’s act asserting his “supreme authority and supremacy over all persons and in all causes ecclesiastical within this his kingdom” occurred on Nov. 16, 1669 (Vos, *Scottish Covenanters*, p. 82), whereas the first indulgence manifestly was not grounded on that new-claimed supremacy as it was passed in the summer of 1669. See Bairdie further argue that the power to indulge did not flow out of the claimed supremacy: [Balm from Gilead](#), pp. 57–58.

³⁴⁶ Buckroyd, *Life of James Sharp*, pp. 72–73.

³⁴⁷ As to how receiving the indulgence was received, Wodrow writes: “it seemed agreed to, almost by everybody, that, in this troubled state of the church, ministers might warrantably accept of this liberty to preach... provided a due testimony were given against the manner of granting this favor, which all reckoned gravaminous.” *History*, 2.135.

ourselves towards lawful authority, notwithstanding of our known judgments in church affairs,³⁴⁸ as well becomes loyal subjects, and that from a principle of conscience.”³⁴⁹

This confession,³⁵⁰ note, affirms divine-right Church government, with their ministry intrinsically deriving from Christ, not the State. It nowhere approves of episcopacy or Erastianism, nor does it renounce presbyterianism. Nor does the oration promise obedience to bishops or the State, but only “to demean ourselves towards lawful,” not unlawful “authority”. No restriction on their preaching or other activities is promised beyond “that wisdom and prudence which becomes faithful ministers of Jesus Christ.” Subsequent indulged ministers sought to give similar protests as able.³⁵¹

It is recorded that many of the ministers, churches and people did not obey the enjoined restrictions, or others, but were non-conformists within the establishment,³⁵² as

³⁴⁸ For the presbyterian views of Hutcheson and Douglas (another indulged minister, and a Westminster divine), see Wodrow, *History*, 2.117, 180–81. That Hutcheson well knew the orthodox doctrine of *circa sacra*, and testified accurately to it before the government, from a position of being indulged, see Wodrow, *History*, 2.216 & 220. The same shows that Hutcheson was not weak willed, but stronger willed than most.

³⁴⁹ Wodrow, *History*, 2.133.

³⁵⁰ Wodrow on the second indulgence (1672): “I find, generally speaking, it was the opinion of ministers there [West of Edinburgh], that, providing a sufficient testimony were given against the Erastian part of the civil magistrate, the indulgence might so far be gone into...” *History*, 2.206.

³⁵¹ Wodrow, *History*, 2.133. Note that the civil government never claimed that ministers’ ministry was not from Jesus Christ, or even was from civil authority. Alexander Blair’s protest, however, was false on the matter and received civil punishment; Wodrow, *History*, 2.216–222.

³⁵² Wodrow: “The ministers were required to do evil, but they did it not, and were made a kind of prisoners in their own congregations, and their neighbors discharged to partake of their ministry; yet the prohibition was not obeyed.” *History*, 2.135; “though it was not doubted that the magistrate had power to restrict ministers to one particular parish; yet they seemed generally to agree, that when the whole ministry were confined, it was not their duty to obey.” *History*, 2.206–7.

An example of a non-conforming indulged minister was John Bairdie of Selvadge (†1685). He wrote after the 2nd Indulgence: “some... [considering] that it was their duty to take hold of the indulged liberty, with a resolution to give Testimony in their station... as also, not to observe any unlawful injunctions imposed, or to be imposed upon them; judging that thus they wisely separated the precious from the vile and were obliged to hold fast that which was good, as well as to refuse the evil.” “Does not their non-acceptance and non-observance of these rules free them of all crime supposed to be therein?” “they are not wanting to give practical testimony for God against the evils of the time, in refusing all practical conforming thereunto or compliance therewith; and is not this more than much verbal testimony?... the sober cannot but think a real, material, great, practical testimony of far more importance and significancy than much verbal, as is plain from [Lk. 21:12–13](#); [Mt. 10:17–18](#).” “being ready to disobey it [confinement to their parish] whenever duty otherwise called them so to do. Only they love not to trample upon the magistrate’s authority, to transgress without just cause his hardest sentences. Yet so far only and no further do they regard such sentences as that when the authority of God interposes, disobliging them to observe them, they

recent scholarship has very fully and helpfully uncovered.³⁵³ An important early historian of the period, [Robert Wodrow](#) (†1734), says of the indulged ministers, “they took the good in the liberty, and meddled not with the evil [restrictions] in it.”³⁵⁴ Enforcement of the laws was spotty and sometimes lenient.³⁵⁵

The indulged ministers did not publicly write against the indulgence, though willing, Wodrow says, because of their desire for unified acting with their other non-conforming brethren who thought accepting the indulgence was sinful, who would not join with them in publishing against it due to the indulged accepting it.³⁵⁶ The indulged initially did not write for or in defense of taking the indulgence, but “with much Christian meekness and patience endured reproach... they were resolved by their silence and

scruple not to say with the apostles, ‘Better obey God than man.’ [Acts 5:29]” [Balm from Gilead](#), pp. 5, 77, 118–19, 122. For more specific examples, see Wodrow, *History*, 2.215–16, 220–21; 3.269–70.

³⁵³ See McDougall, [Covenants & Covenanters](#), chs. 4–5, “Negotiating Covenanting Commitments: Partial Conformity 1662–1669” & “Indulgences & Nonconformity 1666–1679: New Perspectives”, pp. 139–200. McDougall: “Ministers who continued to serve in the church could find ways of expressing dissent without eliciting too much attention from the authorities. This included avoiding observance of the annual celebration for Charles’ restoration on 29 May, avoiding taking oaths, and refusing to adhere to changes in worship.” “clerical and lay partial conformity is evidenced in all the areas in which records survive... middle ground opinion [between conformity and non-conformity] and practice existed at the highest clerical level. While Jackson has argued that ‘a substantial middle ground’ existed among the intelligentsia throughout the Restoration period (Jackson, *Restoration Scotland*, p. 163), the remainder of this chapter will show that such middle ground opinion was also prevalent at grassroots level, drawing on local kirk session and presbytery records.” [Covenants & Covenanters](#), pp. 143 & 156.

³⁵⁴ Wodrow, *History*, 2.210. Bairdie: “repair to such and such parishes, and there preach the Gospel and exercise the other parts of their ministry... This ye know is all they did embrace. And in a complex business, why might not the good be taken hold of and the evil abstracted from, waved and laid by? as is directed in the like cases, 1 Thess. 5:21, ‘Prove all things,’ says the apostle, ‘and hold fast that which is good,’ and commended in Isa. 7:15; Heb. 5 at the end [vv. 13–14], and recommended in Phil. 1:9–10. And whatever the magistrate did overstretch in, what is it to the ministers if they did not close with these excesses, as they did not?” [Balm from Gilead](#), pp. 43–44.

Vilant: “the indulged ministers conceived that it was their duty to take what was good in the indulgence and refuse what was evil.” [Review & Examination](#), p. 271.

³⁵⁵ McDougall, [Covenants & Covenanters](#), pp. 159–60, 174, 206. McDougal documents: “the unrigorous way in which the bishops pursued allegiance to the new regime.” [Covenants & Covenanters](#), p. 150.

³⁵⁶ Wodrow, *History*, 2.210. See the history of the story with the proposed public protestation in 2.207–10. Vilant was one of the co-authors. Bairdie: “We wish there had also been, or yet were, a formal, solemn, express testimony in ample and discreet form agreed upon and published by both the indulged and unindulged ministers and people jointly, being jointly concerned therein as a matter of common interest, that the world might see plainly your mind and harmony in this. And this ye know the indulged were never refractory unto more than others, yea, were forward for it; but ye know by whom it was obstructed and who did draw back and decline to concur with them, and so by deserting them discouraged them from proceeding in so choice a duty.” [Balm from Gilead](#), p. 119.

forbearance to evidence their great desire to prevent contentions..."³⁵⁷ and this with numerous precedents from Scripture and Church history.³⁵⁸

Covenanting

Often the response to the above by those who yet disagree with accepting the indulgence is that (partial) conforming violated the Scottish [National Covenant](#) (1638) and the [Solemn League and Covenant](#) (SL&C, 1643) between England, Scotland and

³⁵⁷ Vilant: "The indulged ministers have generally hitherto (for ought I know), with much Christian meekness and patience endured reproach, finding that what letters were spread abroad against them did contain nothing but high magisterial dictates without any show of arguments, as also, they were resolved by their silence and forbearance to evidence their great desire to prevent contentions: but now, lest their silence should be looked on as faintness arising from the conviction of the evil of their cause (which, it seems, made the author of one of these letters to write that they never had the heart to dare to speak or themselves), I shall say something in their behalf." [Review & Examination](#), p. 5.

³⁵⁸ Vilant: "The command that requires the making of confession is an affirmative precept; and though it be obliged at all times, yet [it] does not oblige to give a testimony at all times; we must never deny the truth, but we must not ever make confession of it, as all casuists grant. We do not hear that Moses and Aaron made any formal protestation against Pharaoh's blasphemy and avowed rebellion against God; they heard him say, 'Who is the Lord that I should obey his voice, to let Israel go? I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go.' They make no protestation nor declaration against this blasphemous speech and avowed rebellion against God; they only show their warrant and humbly insist in their petition: and yet these extraordinary ambassadors of God were in another manner of capacity for doing this, if it had been necessary and seasonable, than ordinary ministers are; read [Ex. 5:2-3](#).

Nor do we hear that the other children gave any written or verbal protestation against the making of the image and proclamation to worship it: Nor did Daniel give any written, subscribed or verbal declaration against the making, signing, publishing of that decree which discharged all petitions to be given to any for thirty days, but to Darius, which was to make him God alone: All that they did was, they did not obey, but acted contrary to those godless decrees and choosed rather to suffer death than obey them.

Nor did our Savior speak anything before Herod, though a vile man, when He was before him. Christ held his peace a long time before the council, and when He spoke, He gave in no written or verbal protestation against the council, it's constitution and corruptions, nor against the sentence they pronounced against him as a blasphemer. Nor when Paul compeared at Rome do we hear of any protestation against the monstrous abominations and persecutions of Nero.

Many martyrs and confessors did forbear to make public protestation against the idols and idolatry of their persecutors; and all that many of them said was this, that they were Christians and upon that suffered. How many, both private Christians and ministers, have appeared before the council, since the supremacy was established, who did not think themselves obliged to give in a written or verbal confession, testimony or protestation against the supremacy and the invasions made upon the government of the Church?" [Review & Examination](#), pp. 78-81.

[Eccl. 10:4](#), "If the spirit of the ruler rise up against thee, leave not thy place; for yielding pacifieth great offences." [Amos 5:7, 10, 12-14](#), "Ye who turn judgment to wormwood, and leave off righteousness in the earth... They hate him that rebuketh in the gate, and they abhor him that speaketh uprightly... they afflict the just, they take a bribe, and they turn aside the poor in the gate from their right. Therefore the prudent shall keep silence in that time; for it is an evil time."

Ireland. Yet this cannot be demonstrated, because it is not true. The [National Covenant](#), while it affirms “presbyteries” and other church courts, yet nowhere affirms divine-right Church government,³⁵⁹ nor forbids bishops or episcopacy.³⁶⁰ Rather, in speaking of “that Roman Antichrist,” the covenant only condemns “his... wicked hierarchy,” that is, the peculiar, wicked hierarchy that was properly “his”.³⁶¹

³⁵⁹ The National Covenant’s following statement could be affirmed by persons not holding to divine-right Church government, in distinguishing between “God’s true and Christian religion” and the listed Church courts that follow. To equate them, or that the latter formally flow from the former, is not a necessary interpretation: “Likeas many Acts of Parliament are conceived for maintenance of God’s true and Christian religion, and the purity thereof, in doctrine and sacraments of the true church of God, the liberty and freedom thereof, in her national, synodal assemblies, presbyteries, sessions, policy, discipline, and jurisdiction thereof; as that purity of religion, and liberty of the church was used, professed, exercised, preached, and confessed, according to the reformation of religion in this realm...”

³⁶⁰ So David Stevenson, *The Scottish Revolution 1637–1644: The Triumph of the Covenanters* (NY: St. Martin’s Press, 1974), p. 85. McDougall: “David Stevenson demonstrated in *The Scottish Revolution* that the National Covenant first drawn up in February 1638 was not explicitly Presbyterian or anti-Episcopal. Therefore, in theory Episcopalians could subscribe without any qualms... Alan Hamilton’s 2013 thesis demonstrates how Robert Leighton’s beliefs could accommodate both subscribing the Covenants and conforming to Episcopacy in 1662... Covenanting ideas were complex and multi faceted.” [Covenants & Covenanters](#), p. 26. Alan James Hamilton, *In Mitioem Partem: Robert Leighton’s Journey towards Episcopacy*, PhD thesis (University of Glasgow, 2013).

“Mullan correctly argued that [Robert] Baillie represented a conciliatory voice at meetings to draft the National Covenant, calling on modification of the text to ensure that the Covenant ‘avoided an open renunciation of episcopacy’.” “During the proceedings [of the general assembly of 1638] to ‘abjure and remove’ the bishops, it appears that Baillie’s dissent [to abjuring, not removing] may have reflected the opinion of a large but silent minority.” Alexander Campbell, ‘[Episcopacy in the Mind of Robert Baillie, 1637–1662](#)’, *The Scottish Historical Review*, vol. 93, no. 236, pt. 1 (April 2014), pp. 33 & 40.

David Dickson and Alexander Henderson: “Upon a new examination of the words, ye [Aberdeen doctors] perceive that the Articles of Perth and Episcopacy are condemned as erroneous corruptions... unto which our answer is, that it appears that you will have all the Covenanters against their intention, and whether they will or not, to disallow and condemn the Articles of Perth and Episcopal government... But it is known to many hundreds that the words were purposely conceived, for satisfaction of such as were of your [episcopalian] judgement, that we might all join in one heart, and Covenant for establishing religion and opposing errors. And for your argument, whether the Articles of Perth and Episcopacy be against the purity and liberty of the Gospel or not, which is not determined by these words of the Covenant... in the mean time, it being left free, by the words of the Covenant to all, who will, to stand to the defence of their lawfulness... even they who allow Perth Articles and Episcopacy may swear to recover the purity of the Gospel.” *The Answers of some Brethren of the Ministry to the Replies of the Ministers and Professors of Divinity in Aberdeen, concerning the Late Covenant* (Edinburgh, 1638), ‘[To the Fourth](#)’, unnumbered.

³⁶¹ Honyman: “It is alleged that under the name of the Pope’s wicked hierarchy, the office of episcopacy was abjured; But they who say so, would consider that the abjuring of the Pope’s wicked hierarchy imports not an abjuration of the office of a bishop more than the office of a presbyter or a deacon, which are parts of that hierarchy (so called by the Council of Trent, Canon. Sess. 7)... The intent of that Covenant was... to abjure the hierarchy so far as it was the Pope’s, (‘his wicked hierarchy’)...” [Seasonable Case](#), p. 31. Honyman gives further arguments that both the covenants of 1580 and 1638 did not forbid episcopacy.

The SL&C never expressly mentions divine-right Church government or presbyterianism.³⁶² The SL&C's starting foundation was that covenanters were "of one reformed religion," which was true of almost everyone in England, Scotland and Ireland. The covenant does not set a standard for separation, but only a goal to work toward³⁶³ (which could be done from inside the Restoration Church establishment). Those who are to be opposed, "the enemies of God," "our common enemies," "incendiaries, malignants, or evil instruments... hindering the reformation of religion," are left undefined, letting covenanters differently fill them in as they saw appropriate, as in fact happened.

³⁶² Gilbert Burnet: "One article of it was thought strange, that one government of the church was abjured, but none sworn to in its place for England." *The Memoirs of the Lives & Actions of James & William Dukes of Hmilton & Castle-Herald* (Oxford University Press, 1852), p. 307. The SL&C does say, "we shall sincerely, really, and constantly... endeavor, in our several places and callings, the preservation of the reformed religion in the Church of Scotland, in doctrine, worship, discipline, and government... the reformation of religion in the kingdoms of England and Ireland, in doctrine, worship, discipline, and government, according to the Word of God, and the example of the best reformed Churches..." Nothing would preclude a person who doesn't think the Word of God teaches divine-right Church government from affirming this.

London Presbyterians: "we also find that there are many who doubt whether there be any particular Church-government prescribed in the Word..." "there are a prevailing party risen up that will have no government at all to be found in the Word." London Provincial Assembly, *Vindication of Presbyterial Government*, preface & p. 11.

Thomas Coleman, the Westminster divine who gave the SL&C to the House of Lords and others, an Erastian, explained his own view thus: "I know no such distinction of government ecclesiastical and civil, in the sense I take government for the corrective part thereof. All ecclesiastical (improperly called) government being merely doctrinal: the corrective or punitive part being civil or temporal." *A Brotherly Examination Re-Examined...* (London: Clark, 1645), p. 11.

The Independents who swore the SL&C interpreted "the best reformed Churches" as themselves. The English were "for keeping of a door open in England to Independency." Baillie, *Letters*, 2.90. There was a significant section in parliament for Independency. Independents in the House of Commons which were members of Westminster included: Evelyn, Fiennes, Hesilrige and Vane.

While the reformation in Church government was to be "according to the Word," yet many of the English did not believe the Word held forth a particular, obliging Church government, but left it free according to expediency, and nothing in the SL&C excludes this understanding. Neal: "Sir Henry Vane [a member of Westminster, a parliamentarian and an Independent]... in the first article he inserted that general phrase, of reforming 'according to the word of God,' by which the English thought themselves secure from the inroads of presbytery;" *History of the Puritans*, 2.218.

³⁶³ Preface: "The Solemn League and Covenant, for reformation and defense of religion..." Section 1: "That we shall sincerely, really, and constantly, through the grace of God, endeavor, in our several places and callings, the preservation of the reformed religion..." Section 2: "That we shall, in like manner, without respect of persons, endeavour..." See Point 8 of Fentiman, 'A Defense of the Majority Opinion in the Free Church of Scotland on Covenanting' (RBO).

Vilant: The indulged ministers "declared themselves before the Council to be of the same judgment they were of before; and they still preach the same doctrine, are for the same worship, discipline, government. They are against Popery, Prelacy, error, schism, etc. as they were before the indulgence. The Covenant obliges to continue in adhering to the good things and opposing the evils mentioned in it, but does not oblige the covenanters that they shall accept of no favor, or of a righting of any wrong done to them..." *Review & Examination*, p. 229.

The only religious things the [SL&C](#) distinctly precludes, beyond what the Word expressly states, is Popery and prelacy, yet not Erastianism³⁶⁴ or episcopacy. While the [SL&C](#) mentions archbishops and bishops in its definition of prelacy, it is not grammatically necessary (in the words of the [SL&C](#)) to “endeavor the extirpation” of those offices as disjoined from prelacy, as it was so explained to the Westminster

³⁶⁴ The [SL&C](#) never would have been considered by the English parliament if it had precluded Erastianism, as many in parliament were Erastians (as their subsequent conduct also shows; see [footnote 436](#) below). Numerous members of the Westminster Assembly, which subscribed the [SL&C](#), were Erastians, such as: Coleman, Cook, Evelyn, Fiennes, Hesilrige, Lightfoot, St. John, Seldon and Whitelock. Downing, Glynne, Maynard and Rudyerd were both presbyterian and Erastian.

London Presbyterians: “There are some that although they have taken a [[Solemn League and Covenant](#)], to endeavor the reformation of the Church in discipline, according to the Word, yet are not afraid to say that there is no particular Church-government set down in the Word, that the Christian magistrate is the fountain of all Church-power, and that to assert a *jus divinum* of Church-government is destructive to all political government. Now though this opinion prevail much with State-divines...” *Vindication of Presbyterian Government*, p. 2.

Assembly and the English House of Lords³⁶⁵ before they took the league (which could be more easily broken than a “covenant”).³⁶⁶

While the [SL&C](#) says, “we shall sincerely, really, and constantly... endeavor... the preservation of the reformed religion in the Church of Scotland, in doctrine, worship,

³⁶⁵ Neal: “When their [Scottish] commissioners arrived at London, they presented the covenant to the two houses, who referred it to the assembly of divines, where it met with some little opposition: Dr. Featly declared, he durst not abjure prelacy absolutely, because he had sworn to obey his bishop in all things lawful and honest, and therefore proposed to qualify the second article thus,—‘I will endeavour the extirpation of Popery, and all antichristian, tyrannical, or independent prelacy;’ but it was carried against him. Dr. Burges objected to several articles, and was not without some difficulty persuaded to subscribe, after he had been suspended. The prolocutor Mr. Gataker, and many others, declared for primitive episcopacy, or for one stated president with his presbyters to govern every church; and refused to subscribe till a parenthesis was inserted, declaring what sort of prelacy was to be abjured, viz. ‘church government by archbishops, bishops, deans and chapters, archdeacons, and all other ecclesiastical officers depending upon them.’ The Scots, who had been introduced into the assembly September 15, were for abjuring episcopacy as simply unlawful, but the English divines were generally against it.

Bishop Burnet says, our [English] commissioners pressed chiefly for a civil league, but the Scots would have a religious one, to which the English were obliged to yield, taking care, at the same time, to leave a door open for a latitude of interpretation... When Mr. [Thomas] Colman read the covenant before the house of lords, in order to their subscribing it, he declaimed, that by prelacy all sorts of episcopacy were not intended, but only the form therein described. Thus the wise men on both sides endeavoured to outwit each other in wording the articles; and with these slight amendments the covenant passed the assembly and both houses of parliament...” *History of the Puritans*, 2.218.

Baxter: “The Assembly of divines at Westminster were men that... received the Covenant, but were divided about the sense of the word ‘prelacy,’ many professing their judgment to be for moderate episcopacy, whereupon the describing additions ‘archbishops, bishops, deans, archdeacons’ were added. And upon such a profession that it disclaimed not all episcopacy, Mr. [Thomas] Coleman is said to have given the Covenant to the House of Lord’s...” *The Nonconformists’ Plea for Peace* (London, 1679), §7, p. 127. Cf. McDougall, *Covenants & Covenanters*, pp. 65–66. Most of the evidence that the [SL&C](#) did not exclude episcopacy may be found in Robert Leighton, *The Whole Works* new ed. (London: Duncan, 1830), vol. 4, ‘A Modest Defence of Moderate Episcopacy, as Established in Scotland at the Restoration of King Charles II [1660]’, pp. 386–92.

Joseph Hall: “Both the Houses of Parliament, your [Westminster] Assembly and the whole kingdom stand yet free, and unengaged to any part [of declaring for a specific Church government]: For the National [[Solemn League and](#)] [Covenant](#) (as it is interpreted by some of yourselves, and those other divines whose allowed sermons have commented upon it) intends not to abjure and disclaim episcopacy as such, but only bends against the whole present fabric of government as it is built on these arches, these pedestals; so as if it be taken asunder from those (some of them [being] not necessary) appendances, you are no way forestalled in your judgement against it, nor any other that has lifted up his hand in this solemn Covenant. That I may not urge the Latin translation of the same Covenant, printed and sent abroad to the Low-Countries and France and other Churches, which ran only upon *tyrannicum regimen Episcoporum*, that only ‘the tyrannical government of the prelates,’ not their fatherly and brotherly preeminence, is there abjured. Your wisdoms know well how to distinguish betwixt a calling and the abuses of the execution thereof; betwixt the main substance of a calling and the circumstantial and separable appurtenances thereunto from which it may be devested and yet stand entire.” *A Modest Offer of some meet Considerations tendered to the Learned Prolocutor and to the Rest of the [Westminster] Assembly of Divines* ([Oxford] 1644), pp. 2–3.

³⁶⁶ Neal: “Sir Henry Vane [a Westminster divine and parliamentarian] put the word ‘league’ into the title, as thinking that might be broken sooner than a covenant.” *History of the Puritans*, 2.218.

discipline, and government," many in England and Scotland would argue (for better or worse) that episcopacy had been the lawful Church government of Scotland.³⁶⁷

Leading Conforming Covenanters:

Baillie, Honyman & Leighton

Baillie, a leading covenanting, Scottish minister and commissioner to Westminster, stridently advocated, including in print, for divine-right Presbyterianism, and yet held to and taught from Scripture as a professor of divinity for decades a very low form of episcopacy, seeing these things as compatible with each other.³⁶⁸ Though greatly grieved by the changes at the Restoration (the episcopacy therein being too high and unscriptural

³⁶⁷ McDougall: "there was room in theory for Episcopalians to subscribe it and this Covenant was later used by conformists at the Restoration as evidence of the congruence between Covenanting and Scottish Episcopacy." *Covenants & Covenanters*, p. 60; see further pp. 65–66.

³⁶⁸ Campbell: "Here he argued that when schism threatened the unity of a church a presbytery could appoint a temporary bishop, similar to the post-reformation superintendents. This type of bishop would be subject to the jurisdiction of a provincial or national synod, acting in a capacity akin to that of a constant moderator... For Baillie this temporary office was not 'wicked in itself or contrair to the word of God;' indeed, Baillie could not cite any 'classic divine of the Reformed churches' who maintained that such an episcopate was unlawful..." "As Baillie explained, there were certain cases of necessity in which a presbytery could deem it expedient to appoint a temporary bishop, either to prevent schism and preserve the unity of the national church or to preside over an ecclesiastical assembly as moderator... The type of 'superintendent' of which Baillie approved in the ancient church was never granted powers of order or jurisdiction that were not also given to preaching presbyters..." *"Episcopacy in the Mind of Robert Baillie"*, pp. 38 & 49. For Baillie's use of Scriptural precedents, see p. 49.

A bishop or bishops appointed by a general assembly, synod or presbytery, by the elders' authority upon sufficient reasons and accountable to them, is not inconsistent with presbyterianism or contrary to the Word, and in fact may be necessary. On similar issues see on 'Superintendents' and 'Assessor Elders' at 'On Extraordinary Acts of Church Government under Necessity...' (RBO), as well as 'On Auxiliary Positions in or for the Church...' (RBO).

for him; he turned down a bishopric),³⁶⁹ Baillie partially³⁷⁰ conformed out of principle in 1662.³⁷¹ Baillie was not alone. Most of the conforming presbyterian ministers in 1662 were previously of the Resolutioner³⁷² outlook, as Baillie, and held to the continuing obligation of the SL&C.³⁷³

Andrew Honyman was a zealous covenanting³⁷⁴ Resolutioner who became the leading published voice for conformity after the Restoration. Considered a turncoat³⁷⁵ by some, you should read the first few pages of his godly, peaceable and tender, *Seasonable*

³⁶⁹ "[Baillie's] form of episcopacy, for instance, was distinct from the 'reduced' episcopacy of James Ussher, which Baillie denounced because it would have established a permanent episcopate..." "Baillie's *Letters* made clear his aversion to the re-established episcopate [of 1661]: he condemned the restored bishop both in admonitory correspondence to nobles and directly to the new Glaswegian metropolitan, Andrew Fairfoul. Whilst Baillie did not quietly acquiesce to the restoration church settlement, his decision to accept the office of principal of Glasgow University suggests that he had decided to privilege public order over the pursuit of presbyterian reforms at all costs." Campbell, "*Episcopacy in the Mind of Robert Baillie*", pp. 45 & 47; Buckroyd, *Life of James Sharp*, pp. 72-73.

³⁷⁰ Campbell: "Whilst obedience to Charles II was the most effective means of restoring peace in the kirk, Baillie did not advocate unqualified obedience. Charles had to respect Scotland's laws, especially those passed by lawful parliaments and general assemblies." "*Episcopacy in the Mind of Robert Baillie*", p. 52.

³⁷¹ Campbell: "Although Baillie was fundamentally disenchanted with episcopacy after years of religious upheaval for which he blamed the Laudian episcopate, he had not abandoned the argument [from Scripture and the early Church] that a temporary episcopate could effectively restore unity to a fragmented church. It was Baillie's overriding desire for a return to peace and normalcy that led him not to contest publicly Charles II's reestablishment of episcopacy but this did not preclude Baillie from exhorting leading nobles and the new archbishop of Glasgow privately. Ironically, this suggests that one of the explanations for the widespread conformity to the Erastian settlement of the post-restoration kirk may be found through analysis of the writings of one of the most strident proponents of a *jure divino* presbyterian polity. Such a conclusion cases mid-century presbyterians in more moderate light than has hitherto been the case." "Whilst covenanters, such as Baillie, may be correctly portrayed as dogmatic, *jure divino* presbyterians, this did not drive them to challenge the Stewart monarchy's lawful power at every turn." "*Episcopacy in the Mind of Robert Baillie*", pp. 34 & 55.

³⁷² For background on this more moderate outlook, in contrast to the Protesters, though there were other groups and varieties in the Scottish Church, see "*The Scottish Resolutioner-Protester Controversy, 1650's*" (RBO).

³⁷³ Mackenzie, *Covenanted Interest in the Three Kingdoms*, pp. 265-68; Buckroyd, *Life of James Sharp*, pp. 59-60.

³⁷⁴ Cameron, *Dictionary*, p. 412.

³⁷⁵ Another leading, conforming, Resolutioner covenantor who became vilified by the strict non-conformists was James Sharp, who became an archbishop in 1661 and was a leading enforcer of the increasingly harsh sanctions against the non-conformists. His modern scholarly biographer found it, in her words, "impossible to find any rational account of Sharp's motives and intentions or any sympathetic consideration of him at all. I have therefore attempted to fill that gap." Buckroyd, *Life of James Sharp*, p. v. Buckroyd gives those motives on pp. 70-77, which may be read as in accord with good intentions, integrity and consistent Christian principles.

Case of Submission to the Church-Government as Now Re-Established.³⁷⁶ Divines commonly accept that covenants do not remove preexisting obligations.³⁷⁷ Honyman, amongst other things, maintains that preaching the Gospel and procuring the greater good of “the public peace and good of Church and State, and prevent[ing] horrid confusions” are preexisting and more foundational ministerial obligations than the form of Church government or what the SL&C could alter.³⁷⁸

Likewise Honyman, echoing Cartwright, argues along a foundational principle of the Resolutioners that “there may and ought to be a brotherly accommodation and concurrence in matters of practice, which are undoubted duty,” and for “the lawfulness of concurrence in a lawful necessary duty,”³⁷⁹ such as gospel-ministers fulfilling their

³⁷⁶ Andrew Honyman, *The Seasonable Case of Submission to the Church-Government as Now Re-Established by Law*, briefly stated and determined by a lover of the peace of this Church and Kingdom (Edinburgh: Tyler, 1662).

³⁷⁷ e.g. Robert Sanderson, *De juramento: Seven Lectures concerning the Obligation of Promissory Oaths*, read publicly in the Divinity School of Oxford (London: Moseley, 1655), 2nd Lecture, §11, ‘An oath makes not a former obligation void’, pp. 57–59; 3rd Lecture, section 10, ‘Oath of a thing which seems unlawful to the party swearing’; section 11, ‘Oath repugnant to former obligation’; section 12, ‘Oath hindering some good’, pp. 82–88.

William Ames: “20. It binds only as far as one can bind himself, i.e., to what he can actually and rightfully perform. It must, therefore, refer always to something lawful and possible.” *The Marrow of Theology*, ed. John Eusden (Baker, 1997), bk. 2, ch. 10, p. 268.

John Dury: “we find ourselves free from all guilt of the least intention of violating any former promises in things which are possible and lawful to be done by us in our places, which were unalterable conditions of all human promises, at all times presupposed and implied therein.” *Just Re-Proposals to Humble Proposals...* (London, 1650), p. 14.

Baxter: “Yea, we [leading non-conformists] hold that neither this [SL&C], nor any other vows of our own, can prevent any obligation that the king has authority to impose upon us, in things great or small; else men might disable magistrates to rule them, and exempt themselves from obedience by vowing beforehand not to obey.” *English Non-conformity*, ch. 37, p. 126.

Turretin: “Every oath concerning a lawful and possible thing which can be performed without detriment to religion, to the obedience due to magistrates and the salvation of our neighbor ought to be kept...” *Institutes*, vol. 2, 11th Topic, 11th Question, §IV, p. 67. Honyman: “if the standing to it be found impeditive of a greater good, to which we are bound by a prior obligation, then the oath, being an obstacle of such a greater good, ceases to bind the swearer.” *Seasonable Case*, p. 27.

³⁷⁸ Honyman, *Seasonable Case*, pp. 27–28.

³⁷⁹ Honyman, *Seasonable Case*, pp. 4–5, citing the important, previous Resolutioner treatise: James Sharp, *A True Representation of the Rise, Progress & State of the Present Divisions of the Church of Scotland* (London, 1657). Sharp: “by their [the Protesters’] denial of the lawfulness of concurrence in a lawful necessary duty, because of the personal sin to fellow-actors in it, they homologate with the tenet and practice of Separatism...” *True Representation*, p. 21.

Byfield: “Fifthly, that where ceremonies are left free and indifferent, and have no commandment to restrain their use or enjoin it, there are men to redeem the offence of their brethren with no other price than the loss of liberty in things indifferent. The apostle Paul says rather than he will offend his brother, he will never eat flesh while he lives, 1 Cor. 10:8, 13. He does not say he will never preach the Gospel while he

divine call to contribute to Church courts despite whatever other defects and sins of others may be therein.³⁸⁰ Honyman continues:

“If I be abridged and restrained as to that authority which I think is due to me, it is the sin (if there be any) of these who do restrain me, and not mine; shall I do no part of my duty because I cannot do all that I think I ought to do, being, as to some part of it, restrained by another?...

Is it not granted by most judicious divines that presbyters, having a power in several cases to suspend the exercise of their own just authority when the suspension of it tends to a public good, may [do this] for the peace of the Church...”³⁸¹

Honyman was not alone in his practice. Besides the greater share of the covenanted Church of Scotland in 1662, most of the Westminster divines had conformed to episcopacy (and that to a higher form of it than what Charles II inaugurated).³⁸²

The godly [Robert Leighton](#), who had subscribed to the National Covenant of 1581 (mostly identical to that of 1638) and supported the covenanter cause at the Second Reformation in Scotland and in the mid-1640's,³⁸³ became a bishop in 1661, and wrote

lives... a necessity lay upon him to preach the Gospel and to yield to the use of all lawful things to get his liberty, whosoever be offended.” *Commentary, on 1 Pet. 2:13*, p. 437.

Baxter: “5. By forgetting the great difference between joining with men in sinful actions, and joining with them in their duty in which they should be encouraged. 6. By forgetting the great difference of keeping in our own place and duty, though bad men are present, and going out of our place and duty to join with them in sin.” *A Second Admonition to Mr. Edward Bagshaw...* (London: Simmons, 1671), ‘[To those Readers...](#)’, p. 3.

³⁸⁰ Honyman on the early-1600's Scottish, presbyterian ministers: “it is certain, ministers then accounted themselves as really bound against the allowance of episcopal government, both by the [National] Covenant [of 1580] and by the Word of God, as any do judge themselves engaged against it by late bonds [in 1661]... that they did so judge, it is out of question; and yet, they thought their practice, in concurring in all lawful matters in synods and presbyteries consistent enough with their judgment touching episcopacy and their bonds against it... For the meetings now [post-1661] and then [in the early-1600's under episcopacy] are of the same constitution, nothing altered.” *Seasonable Case*, p. 13. See also, ‘[That a Person may Petition Prevailing Usurpers, calling them by their Usurped Titles if need be, for things Just, Needful, Good & True](#)’ and ‘[On Serving, or Holding Office under, Prevalent Usurpers](#)’ at ‘[On the Ethics of being under Usurped Powers](#)’ (RBO).

³⁸¹ Honyman, *Seasonable Case*, pp. 10–11.

³⁸² Baxter: “Moreover who knows not that most of the godly able ministers of England since the Reformation did judge episcopacy some of them lawful, and some of them most fit (for the non-conformists were but few), and that even before this late trouble and war, the most, even almost all of those that were of the late Assembly at Westminster, and most through the land, did subscribe and conform to episcopal government as a thing not contrary to the Word of God: so that it is evident that it is very consistent with a godly life to judge episcopacy lawful and fit, or else we should not have had so many hundred learned and godly men of that mind.” *Five Disputations, Disputation 1*, p. 4.

³⁸³ Hamilton, *Leighton's Journey towards Episcopacy*, pp. 76, 104, 108, 110, 120–21, 146.

persuasively that the [SL&C](#) does not forbid episcopacy.³⁸⁴ In the same piece he notes how such covenants in general and the [SL&C](#) in particular are often phrased ambiguously and are capable of many interpretations, they:

“being commonly framed by persons that even, amongst themselves, are not fully of one mind, but have their different opinions and interests to serve (and it was so even in this); they commonly patch up so many several articles and clauses, and those too of so versatile and ambiguous terms, that they prove... matter of endless contentions and disputes amongst them about the true sense and intendment, and the ties and obligations of those doubtful clauses...”³⁸⁵

Leighton was not wrong,³⁸⁶ for more reasons than presented here.

³⁸⁴ Leighton, “A Modest Defence of Moderate Episcopacy, as Established in Scotland [1661] at the Restoration of King Charles II” in *Whole Works*, 4.386–92.

³⁸⁵ Leighton, “Modest Defence of Moderate Episcopacy,” p. 391.

³⁸⁶ Neal: “Bishop Burnet says our [English] commissioners pressed chiefly for a civil league, but the Scots would have a religious one, to which the English were obliged to yield, taking care at the same time to leave a door open for a latitude of interpretation. Sir Henry Vane put the word ‘league’ into the title, as thinking that might be broken sooner than a covenant; and in the first article he inserted that general phrase, of reforming ‘according to the word of God;’ by which the English thought themselves secure from the inroads of presbytery; but the Scots relied upon the next words, ‘and according to the practice of the best reformed churches,’ in which they were confident their discipline must be included.

When Mr. [Thomas] Colman read the covenant before the House of Lords, in order to their subscribing it, he declaimed that by prelacy all sorts of episcopacy were not intended, but only the form therein described. Thus the wise men on both sides endeavored to outwit each other in wording the articles; and with these slight amendments the covenant passed...” Neal, *History of the Puritans*, 2.218.

Baillie: “It was read distinctly the second time [in the Westminster Assembly] by the moderator. The mind of the most part was speared [inquired into], both of ministers and elders, where in a long hour’s space, every man, as he was by the moderator named, did express his sense as he was able. After all considerable men were heard, the catalogue was read, and all unanimously did assent.” *Letters*, 2.90.

The most detailed background to the [SL&C](#) I have found, relating more alterations and disputed parts of the covenant and the many political maneuverings behind it, around it and immediately following it, is David Stevenson, ch. 9, “[The Solemn League & Covenant, June 1643-January 1644](#)” in *The Scottish Revolution 1637–1644: The Triumph of the Covenanters* (St. Martin’s Press, 1974), pp. 276–98.

McDougall: “Despite the theories of contractual or limited monarchy imbued in the [National] Covenant, the actual wording was sufficiently vague to allow for multiple interpretations. Indeed, Stevenson has argued that it was deliberately vague to allow for a broad base of support and that it was not until it became clear that Charles would not compromise that the leading Covenanters followed an approach that aimed at limiting the king’s power and outlawing Episcopacy. (Stevenson, *The Scottish Revolution*, pp. 82–90) The vague wording of the Covenant in regard to monarchical allegiance would cause divisions among the Covenanting leadership from at least as early as 1639.”

“as early as December 1638 there were already competing visions of what it meant to be a Covenanter.” “the term ‘Covenanter’ was contentious at least as early as 1643.”

“By 1648 a number of Covenanting interpretations were evident [about the [SL&C](#)]. There were those who subscribed the National Covenant but objected to the [Solemn League](#) and revolted against the regime alongside Montrose. Royalist Covenanter Montrose refused to subscribe the [Solemn League and Covenant](#)

Indulged Covenanters

To return to the [SL&C](#) itself, Charles II, while appointing archbishops and bishops, did not necessarily appoint all the other by-offices of prelacy condemned by the [SL&C](#) upon the Scots, as were in England. To the extent some such prelatric offices were appointed, they were to be resisted, in the language of the covenant, “according to our places and callings.” Our authors below take that phrase very seriously and profoundly, in a way we do not as much today. Baxter would later write:

and engaged in warfare against the Covenanting regime with the assistance of anti-Campbell clans. At the opposite end of the spectrum were the hardline Covenanters who supported the [Solemn League and Covenant](#) and fought against Montrose. This dominant faction was torn asunder by the imprisonment of Charles I by the English Parliament in 1647. A conservative grouping led by Hamilton, the Engagers, were unwilling to condone what they perceived to be the flagrant usurpation of royal authority. The hardliners dominated the General Assembly and through the presbyteries they engaged localities in this national debate, eliciting petitions. Throughout the 1640s local communities were exposed to the variety of Covenanting positions which emerged.”

“As in Scotland, there was a range of interpretations of the [Solemn League and Covenant](#) in England by 1652 (See Edward Vallance, *Revolutionary England and the National Covenant*, pp. 155–166). Competing interpretations had led to a stand-off in 1649–50. By 1648, the apparent unity achieved in 1643 had unravelled. In the eyes of the Cromwellian regime, the Scottish invasion during the Engagement constituted the Solemn League’s ‘being wholly broken, and all other Treaties with it’. Similarly, Scottish hardliners saw the English as having broken the [Solemn League and Covenant](#) by executing Charles I in January 1649. After the execution of the king, the hardline Covenanters – who had previously [been] in league with Cromwell during the 1648 Whiggamore raid – led by Guthrie, Wariston, and Rutherford vehemently denounced the actions of ‘sectaries’ who had ‘broken the Covenant, and dispised the Oath of God’... The Rump Parliament did not repeal the [Solemn League and Covenant](#), but in 1649 drew up an Engagement of loyalty to the Commonwealth...”

Edward Vallance has demonstrated that most English Presbyterians viewed the Engagement to the Commonwealth as a breach of the [Solemn League](#), but the supporters of the Rump Parliament either perceived the two as compatible or saw the [Solemn League](#) as a ‘temporary arrangement which was now past its political sell-by date’. The battle of Dunbar in 1650 can thus be understood as a battle between two armies who upheld alternative – and conflicting – interpretations of the [Solemn League and Covenant](#)...”

“The argument presented here is that Covenanting interpretations should be recognised as the fluid and malleable attitudes that they were. While ideas can be traced over time, the development of Covenanting identities is far too transient, personal, and directed by local differences to be codified. This is further evidenced by the changing of sides which went on among the ministry and laity in the 1670s. Covenanting was not a fixed movement with static and clearly identifiable opinion groups.”

“the ever changing circumstances of the period under discussion ensured that a spectrum of Covenanting positions developed. The most effective way of uncovering this is to stop viewing the Covenanters as being part of a linear movement, but rather assess the period between 1638 and 1679 as a series of moments in which a broad range of ideas about Covenanting could be, and were, disputed. This resulted in the frequent changing of positions as contemporary events required the re-evaluation of both national and personal beliefs and a reimagining of what constituted Covenanting obligations.” “there was not one moment between 1638 and 1679 in which Covenanting elicited a uniform national interpretation.” [Covenants & Covenanters](#), pp. 42, 85, 111–12, 198, 200, 202, 205, 211; see also pp. 125, 129, 131–32, 204.

"We believe not that the Scots' [Solemn League and] Covenant or any other does oblige us to sedition, rebellion, schism or any sin; nor does [it] disoblige us from any obedience due to any superior."³⁸⁷

It can be understood that conformity sought and placed "the Churches of God in the three kingdoms," to use the SL&C's words, into "the nearest conjunction and uniformity in religion, Confession of Faith, Form of Church Government, Directory for worship and Catechising"³⁸⁸ that was possible in the circumstances.³⁸⁹

Indulged ministers conscientiously sought to fulfill their covenanted duties³⁹⁰ and asked from conviction: "Is not schism a breach of your covenant, as well as prelacy?... And will ye cry out of others for breach of covenant and yet violate the same so grossly yourselves?"³⁹¹ The covenanter Robert Fleming, Sr. was of the same mind.³⁹² As for Hutcheson it is clear he was previously very conscious and circumspect of his and the Church of Scotland's actions being in consistency with Scotland's covenants,³⁹³ and it may be assumed he remained so when he and the others took the indulgence.³⁹⁴

³⁸⁷ Baxter, *English Nonconformity*, ch. 2, p. 16.

³⁸⁸ "The Restoration Settlement... abandoned Arminian theology... The Five Articles of Perth [which had involved ceremonies], the 1636 Book of Canons and the 1637 *Book of Common Prayer*." Cameron, *Dictionary*, p. 711. No directory for worship was imposed, so Westminster's could continue to be used (as in fact happened), and catechizing was not prohibited.

³⁸⁹ Anthony Ascham: "For we swore to bring the Church discipline in the three kingdoms to as near a similitude as the constitution of the places would bear, not into the very same;" *The Bounds & Bonds of Public Obedience, or a Vindication of our Lawful Submission to the Present Government...* (London, 1649), p. 57.

³⁹⁰ Bairdie: "Cleave close to your reformed religion and covenanted duties, against defections on all hands. Consent never by word, write or deed to any thing contrary thereunto, specially what is expressly and plainly renounced thereby: Yet take heed of captious glosses and sinister applications of your covenant: It may be wrested, as some do the Scriptures; always stick to its true intent and native meaning faithfully; and resolve to follow the Lamb whithersoever He goes, through thick and thin..." *Balm from Gilead*, pp. 170-71.

³⁹¹ Bairdie, *Balm from Gilead*, pp. 9-10; "Is it not preposterous to be hot against prelacy and Erastianism (sad ills indeed!) and yet friendly enough toward schism, error and some other things repugnant to the Word of God and your covenants as well as these? Let your zeal be universal and impartial against all evil, hating every false way; and while ye shun Scylla, dash not upon Charybdis." *Ibid.*, p. 166. Vilant: "are by solemn covenants obliged to extirpate schism..." *Review & Examination*, p. 596.

³⁹² Fleming: "we are no less solemnly engaged there against schism than either prelacy or Erastianism." *Church Wounded*, §3, p. 23.

³⁹³ Hutcheson & James Wood, *A Review & Examination of a Pamphlet Lately Published bearing the Title of, Protesters No Subverters & Presbytery No Papacy, etc.* (Edinburgh: 1659), pp. 58, 68, 78-79.

³⁹⁴ McDougall: "partial conformists... can still be defined as Covenanters as they did not disown the Covenants and displayed a degree of discontent with the explicitly anti-Covenanting regime. Moreover, by refusing to observe changes in worship, partially conformist ministers stood by the Westminster

The Solemn League & Covenant: Not Perpetual or Unqualified as a Civil Bond

The [SL&C](#), be it noted, nowhere states that it, as a civil bond, is perpetual forever. The covenant speaks of “we, and our posterity after us” and “to all posterity,” but these phrases are parts of purpose-clauses. Certain actions are to be endeavored after, “that we, and our posterity after us, may, as brethren, live in faith and love...” Likewise, with respect to “these kingdoms,” “we shall... endeavor that they may remain conjoined in a firm peace and union to all posterity...” The actions endeavored in the circumstances unto an ideal goal of indefinite temporal length, and this language, need not necessarily be unconditioned, however some other parties may have interpreted it.

This understanding was part of the original context of the original, institutional parties signing on, in accord with the declared sentiment of one leading parliamentarian and member of Westminster who had the league modified before it was sworn, so that, to his mind, it could be more easily broken³⁹⁵ (presumably if circumstances decisively changed in the civil war, causing a shifting of priorities).³⁹⁶ The [SL&C](#)’s phrase that we shall “all the days of our lives... promote the same, according to our power” can and should be understood for as long as the covenant lasts, just as in other covenants (even in Scripture), recognizing the necessary, implicit conditions in promissory covenants between parties.³⁹⁷

Directory... [which was] perceived by many as a crucial component to Covenanting." [Covenants & Covenanters](#), pp. 143–44.

³⁹⁵ See [footnote 365](#) above.

³⁹⁶ Ames: “31. A promise that is confirmed by a lawful oath is to be kept, provided the circumstances remain the same...” *Marrow of Theology*, bk. 2, ch. 10, p. 269. Rutherford on a different covenant: “For... that covenant was like [the] letter of the king raised to such a day, and the date being expired, the letter cease[s] to be in force.” *The Covenant of Life Opened* (Edinburgh: Anderson, 1655), pt. 1, ch. 8, p. 49. Turretin: “Thus when the formal reason of an oath is taken away, the oath ceases by reason of the event.” *Institutes*, vol. 2, 11th Topic, 11th Question, §II, p. 67. See ‘[Anthony Ascham on the Expiring of the Solemn League & Covenant, 1649](#)’ (RBO) and Fentiman, “A Defense of the Majority Opinion in the Free Church of Scotland on Covenanting” (RBO), [points 6–13](#). See also Honyman’s arguments in [footnote 275](#) above.

³⁹⁷ Ascham: “If the terms of our utmost ‘endeavors’ and ‘all the days of our lives’ are to be understood literally, and that we must not survive any violation of the Covenant... The terms of ‘forever’ [which the [SL&C](#) does not use] or ‘for all the days of our lives’ are not in our contracts to be understood naturally, but morally. For we find it plainly in the [Mosaic] Judicial Law that after a Jew had taken a servant and bored a hole through his ear he was (as the text [[Ex. 21:6](#)] says) to serve him ‘forever,’ although one of them might

Most importantly, however, ‘Vows, Oaths, Covenants & Constitutions can Never bind Beyond God’s Law’ (Mt. 15:3–8; Jm. 4:12) and ‘All Vows & Oaths are Qualified’.³⁹⁸ The SL&C, if it bind “according to the Word of God,” as it says, must give way to God’s Word as primary. The SL&C does not expressly contain all the ethical duties adhering by nature’s light and law or by Scripture, that only perfect rule of our faith and practice (2 Tim. 3:16). To adapt Baxter’s words:

He that swore to communicate with no church that uses a deficient form of Church government, swore wickedly like a schismatic; and he that swore that God’s providence should never return him to a necessity of participating in a deficient form of Church government swore blasphemously, as if he could have governed the world against God.³⁹⁹

Misrepresentations

To return to the ethics of the indulgence controversy: [Johannes Vos](#), a mid-1900’s minister of the Reformed Presbyterians (who trace their lineage through the Scottish non-conformists and Cameronians), wrote a standard book for defending their tradition. In his section on the first indulgence,⁴⁰⁰ he relates numerous factual errors⁴⁰¹ (due to being

possibly have died the next day, and both of them after a while might have been made captives to others. The law calls the league of marriage *individua vitae consuetudo*, a cohabitation for all the days of our lives, for so it should be *ex voto contrahenti* [out of the vow binding], in the sincere desires of the contractors. Yet we know one ordinarily dies before the other and that many conditions may happen to legitimate their divorce afterwards, though the contract was never so religiously made in the presence of almighty God at first." On the necessary, implicit conditions in promissory covenants between parties, even sworn on God’s name and for his purposes, see ‘[Anthony Ascham on the Expiring of the Solemn League & Covenant, 1649](#)’ (RBO).

³⁹⁸ Both at ‘[On Oaths & Vows](#)’ (RBO).

³⁹⁹ Baxter, *Catholic Communion Doubly Defended*, [section 5](#), p. 33. Vilant: Wamphray “quarrels with the indulged ministers because of the want [lack] of the free and full exercise of discipline, and that in the lawful courts of Christ; and that they dispense calmly with the want of Church-discipline in presbyteries and synods. Answer 1: As I said before, this is to quarrel against the holy providence of God.” [Review & Examination](#), p. 222.

⁴⁰⁰ Vos, *The Scottish Covenanters*, 91–94.

⁴⁰¹ Vos says: “Those accepting the Indulgence had, in order to claim the stipend of the parish, to obtain presentation from the patron and collation from the bishop of the diocese.” If this were the case, it would not have been an indulgence, as these were exactly the requirements in 1662. Not only is this not in the original indulgence, but Wodrow documents two specific cases where the indulged ministers (Rogers and

reliant on secondary sources), the two most important of which say that (1) “to accept the Indulgence meant to accept the Erastian supremacy, and this acceptance... Was actually one of the stated conditions attached to the offer...” and (2) the indulged ministers “must not publicly speak or preach against the doctrine that the king is supreme in all ecclesiastical causes.” Neither the first indulgence,⁴⁰² or any other coming later, says anything of the sort.

Vos says taking the indulgence involved “becoming Episcopalians” and was “a compromise with an unscriptural form of Church government...” Such “must be regarded as a sacrifice of principle... they compromised with prelacy.”⁴⁰³ This is to confound material actions with their formal ends. The indulged ministers did not necessarily sacrifice or compromise any principle⁴⁰⁴ or become anything but

Miller) did not do this; *History*, 2.132–33. Vilant: “Nor could the indulged ministers hinder the council to have regard to the consent of the patrons, but they had no regard to it.” [Review & Examination](#), p. 171.

Vos also says: “If unwilling to submit to these requirements, they could exercise their ministry and have the use of the manse and glebe.” This was not in the original indulgence, but was proposed by Lauderdale in a letter to the king of June 7, 1669, suggesting an indulgence. Vos was summarizing Hetherington, *History*, pp. 424–25. Hetherington claims to be summarizing a letter of the king of July 15, 1669. Yet his last quote from it, of three lines, is exactly from Lauderdale’s letter, with the same distinctive pronouns of Lauderdale and his associates that the king would not have used. Wodrow was much closer to the sources and has a fuller, documented discussion. The original source of the first indulgence as Wodrow gives it is dated July 27, 1669, from “his majesty’s privy council”. It states the actual requirements for the first ministers that took the indulgence.

⁴⁰² In Wodrow, *History*, 2.132. For the reasons behind Vos’s mistakes, see [footnote 400](#).

⁴⁰³ Vos, *Scottish Covenanters*, pp. 92–93.

⁴⁰⁴ David C. Lachman repeats the charge that the indulged “so compromised their principles,” in Cameron, *Dictionary*, “Brown, John (of Wamphray)”, p. 98. Bairdie: “What one point of the received doctrine, worship, discipline and government of the Church of Scotland have your Brethren by their Indulgence receded from?” “are not ye and they agreed in chiefest principles and theses? What’s your difference then but about the application of principles to some hypotheses or particular cases and practices?... O fall not into a stated schism upon so small and disputable a matter!” [Balm from Gilead](#), pp. 133 & 144.

Fleming could say as late as 1681: “there is yet an undeniable oneness and agreement among the true non-conformed ministers and professors of our Church, notwithstanding of this present difference about the accepting of the Indulgence... (1) That we are one in a joint confession and public owning of the same doctrine, worship and government as formerly: whatever by all of us should be sadly regrated as to the want of that freedom in such a public testimony thereto before adversaries; as these sad encroachments have been made... (2) That whatever has been thus wanting in practice... yet are we still one and agreed upon both sides in a declared, and I hope, serious disowning [of] both prelacy and Erastianism as contrary to the Scripture. (3) In this also are we one, that whatever the magistrate has assumed; yet, that he has no just right and power, or is in the least proper for him to judge of the spiritual condition and state of the people, as to the fittedness of ministers for laboring amongst them; and thus to make application of persons to particular places, for the exercise of their ministry there; which is alone proper and competent, to the ordering and cognition of the Church; this, so far, as I know, is upon no side either owned or approven. (4) Herein likewise do we jointly agree that to none it belongs but to our blessed Head and Lawgiver to

presbyterians acting under limitations of a partially unscriptural form of external Church government. If Vos's slurs were true, that anyone who materially accommodates and cooperates with rulers acting under erroneous principles, sinfully sacrifices principles and becomes as their rulers: would not the old Jewish Church of God, with intrinsic, divine-right Church government, ruled by their Erastian Babylonian rulers in their captivity (in a broken and declining state), have been in sin for so accepting that Erastian supremacy,⁴⁰⁵ at the very command of God ([Jer. 27:12-13; 29:4-7](#))?

The Erastian, absolutist, civil rulers over the Jews in Christ's time dictated and changed who was the Jewish, episcopal⁴⁰⁶ high priest at their will,⁴⁰⁷ contrary to God's ordinance ([Lev. 16:32; Num. 20:25-28; 35:25](#)). Yet they allowed Christ and the apostles to otherwise exercise their ministry freely while practicing presbyterianism ([Lk. 7:3; Mt. 18:15-20](#)), alongside the overseeing priests,⁴⁰⁸ or bishops⁴⁰⁹ ([Mt. 26:3, 57; Mk. 11:27; Lk. 20:1](#)). Though Christ and the apostles suffered greatly under these bishops ([Mt. 16:21; 27:1; Mk. 8:31](#)), yet without fleeing ([Mt. 26:47-57; Jn. 18:4-8; Acts 16:25-30; 21:13](#)), they

prescribe and give rules to his servants for the exercise of their ministry; and that these rules we can only own and acknowledge which He has given for the same to us in the Scripture." *Church Wounded*, §2, p. 19.

⁴⁰⁵ Vilant: "it's another reasonless conceit to imagine that when a magistrate assumes to himself some false title or unlawful power, that in that case no use may be made of that lawful authority which he has as magistrate. Though Cyrus prefixed a great lie to his proclamation which granted the Jews liberty to return and build the Temple of the Lord; yet the Jews were not such fools as not to make use of the good decree because the king said that God had given him all the kingdoms of the earth, and so arrogated to himself more power than God had given him." *Review & Examination*, pp. 35-36.

⁴⁰⁶ Not only was the priesthood in the form of a hierarchy, and priests had the final religious determination in important legal matters ([Dt. 17:8-12; 19:17](#), out-ranking any local, ecclesiastical elders that may have previously ruled in the case: [Dt. 21:1-5](#)), but king Jehoshaphat declared and enforced, upon the warrant of [Dt. 17:8-12](#), that "the chief priest is over you in all matters of the Lord." ([2 Chron. 19:8-11](#); cf. [Mt. 26:62-66; Jn. 18:19, 24; Acts 5:17-18, 21, 27; 9:1-2; 23:2; 24:1](#)). [Lev. 4:15-16](#) and [Num. 27:21](#) confirm that the priests and high priest had authority over ecclesiastical elders and the whole people of God.

⁴⁰⁷ Josephus, *Antiquities*, bk. 18, ch. 2, §§1-2; ch. 4, §3; ch. 5, §3; bk. 20, ch. 1, §3; ch. 5, §2; ch. 8, §§5, 8, 11; ch. 9, §§1-4, 7; ch. 10; Jewish War, bk. 4, ch. 3, §6; ch. 4, §4. See [Lk. 3:2; Jn. 18:13; Acts 4:6](#) which evidence more than one person being high priest at a time, contrary to God's ordinance: [Lev. 16:32; Num. 20:25-28; 35:25](#).

⁴⁰⁸ It is acknowledged these overseeing, Levitical priests were by divine-right under the Mosaic economy, yet there was some convenience in that form of government, according to the divine wisdom. Take away the divine-right and that form of government yet remains not wholly unprofitable.

Turretin: "Although we believe that the presbyterian order... approaches nearer to the institution of Christ... still we are unwilling to disturb anyone on this subject or to condemn the usage of the evangelical and Reformed churches who retain the episcopal government so far, as more suitable to the genius and morals and political form of government of their people and more useful for good order (eutaxian) and the exercise of discipline. Provided there be always absent Babylonian pride and papal tyranny and this order be acknowledged as of ecclesiastical, not of divine right." *Institutes*, 3.209.

⁴⁰⁹ The Greek word for bishop, ἐπίσκοπος, means "overseer".

appeared at their courts⁴¹⁰ (Mt. 21:23; 26:59; Acts 21:13; 25:11) in that broken and declining state of the Church. Question: On Vos's premise, were not Christ, the apostles and the whole Jewish Church in sin for cooperating under these restrictions?

Would not churches today which cooperate under American rulers acting under erroneous principles be guilty of all their rulers' errors?⁴¹¹ Say if churches limit (or do not exercise) their own liberty in some ways to comply with over-reaching government restrictions about a spreading disease, so churches may prevent worse things (such as being shut down, or scandalizing unbelievers they are seeking to win⁴¹² to the Gospel),⁴¹³ are they therefore guilty of their rulers' errors? Perhaps some will affirm this, as many have. When you accommodate your boss's unnecessary restrictions at work for the greater good, are you sacrificing God's divine-right of governance over you and you are guilty of your boss's errors? Are you divinely obliged to suffer the consequences of getting fired and hazarding your family's survival every time your company wants you to do something not fully in accord with God-prescribed, right reason?⁴¹⁴

In Vos's section and those that follow, Vos often refers to the non-conforming ministers outside the establishment as "presbyterians" and "covenanters" unqualified, yet this, at best, is a myopic view of the historical situation and a transgression of the fairness wherewith we ought to deal with each other (Ninth Commandment), where many in-conscience presbyterians and covenanters were in the established Church of Christ.⁴¹⁵ Vos says "The Covenanters... rejected every offer of Erastian toleration, [and]

⁴¹⁰ In confirmation, on a related issue, in argument from the worse to the better, see 'That a Person may Petition Prevailing Usurpers, calling them by their Usurped Titles if need be, for things Just, Needful, Good & True' at 'On the Ethics of being under Usurped Powers' (RBO).

⁴¹¹ Vilant: "Is it a sin for ministers, whom God has called to the work of the ministry, to exercise their office in the parishes where they were ordained ministers... Is it a sin because the magistrate permits them to preach?" *Review & Examination*, p. 301.

⁴¹² Mt. 4:19; 1 Cor. 9:19-22; 2 Cor. 5:11; Acts 17:2-4; 26:28-29; Rom. 10:1; 11:13-14; Jam. 5:19-20.

⁴¹³ We are not to scandalize even the malicious apart from necessity: 'We Ought to Refrain from Unnecessarily Scandalizing the Malicious & Giving Them Occasion to Become Worse' at 'On Scandal & Offenses' (RBO).

⁴¹⁴ See 'Scripture Upholds Nature's Light & Law & Right Reason' at 'The Sufficiency of Scripture' (RBO).

⁴¹⁵ Bairdie: "Are ye [non-indulged] not united [with the indulged] in doctrine, worship, principles of discipline and government? and will ye rent at such a rate about the application of one principle to a particular case?" *Balm from Gilead*, pp. 6-7. Fleming: "these eight grounds which are at this day most pretended: 1. These strange intestine conflicts and differences in judgment that are now in the Church, and among professors of the truth as though they were not the children of the same house..." *Church Wounded*, §4, p. 29.

maintained their high principle of the sole headship of Christ over the Church..."⁴¹⁶ Yet Christ and the apostles accepted their Erastian, Roman toleration while maintaining the high principle of Christ's sole, formal headship over the Church ([Eph. 1:20-23](#); [Col. 1:18](#)), as likewise did the presbyterian covenanters in the Erastian establishment.⁴¹⁷ Vos seems strangely unaware that his reflections on the indulged ministers also condemn the godly Scottish covenanters who remained in the broken and declining Erastian establishment under bishops in the early-1600's (which history Vos narrated in chapter two of his book) and most of the Westminster divines, whom Vos so highly praises.

Indulgence Literature

Both [Robert McWard](#) and [John Brown](#) of Wamphray, notable Scottish non-conformist ministers with many virtues in God's sight, were banished to Holland shortly after the Restoration (1660) for making remarks against (or construed against) the changing developments. From there they both wrote books against accepting the indulgences. Lest reverence to their bare name too greatly sway the matter at hand, an indication of their many arguments will be given. In general, what has been said above about evaluating two lists, one of defects (not hard to multiply out) and one of more fundamental, weighty and binding Christian principles,⁴¹⁸ pertains.

Wodrow and others wrote that initially attitudes to accepting the indulgence were favorable until these men later wrote against it:

"as far as I can learn, till some of the banished ministers in Holland, perhaps at first upon misinformations, or at least incomplete accounts from Scotland, some time after this, wrote over some letters and sent home some reasons against joining with the indulged [which were published in 1671, 1678 and 1681]."⁴¹⁹

⁴¹⁶ Vos, *Scottish Covenanters*, pp. 99-100.

⁴¹⁷ Wodrow on the Indulgence and the indulged ministers: "They lamented that it flowed from the exercise of regal supremacy, which none of the takers professed any way to allow of." *History*, 2.134.

⁴¹⁸ Baxter: "Know which are the great duties of a Christian life and wherein the nature of true religion does consist; and then pretend not any lesser duty against those greater, though the least when it is indeed a duty is not to be denied or neglected." *Cure of Church Divisions*, pt. 1, [Direction 39](#), p. 209.

⁴¹⁹ Wodrow, *History*, p. 135. Fleming: "We know that for several years after that accepting of the indulgence that difference both in judgment and practice among us yet did cause no such effect [of division]; but the work of the Gospel did then must discernibly prosper until such violent essays these two

McWard at first in 1671 had a very nuanced view of the indulgence and said some strikingly good things about it,⁴²⁰ mixed in with very negative things. His monograph of the same year⁴²¹ seeking to persuade ministers against the second indulgence being prepared, is highly contextual and shows the conciliatory nature of some of those that prepared the indulgence, who sought to remove objectionable things about it beforehand.⁴²² The main difference between the second indulgence⁴²³ (1672) and the first was that the chosen ministers were to be more strictly confined to their own parish.⁴²⁴

years now past [1679–1681], has been for bringing things to such an extreme. And Oh! from that sad period may be too discernibly dated, some further degree of the Lord's departure from among us..." §3, p. 23;

Vilant: "...the Indulgence, which although it was first looked on as a favor and mercy from God, and the ministers that embraced it were advised thereto by the generality of outed ministers (a great part whereof were then at Edinburgh); yet now the contention about it is come to such a height that the acceptance is cried down as highly sinful and the hearing of indulged ministers preached and written against as utterly unlawful." "that [ministerial] brethren were consulted [for whether the chosen ministers should accept the indulgence or not], and that the generality of the ministers in Scotland were for ministers returning to their own charges;" *Review & Examination*, pp. 4–5, 55.

Bairdie: "When your first Indulgence was granted, how much were we refreshed to see a little reviving, and none of you casting at a day of small things, but rejoicing that any nail was got in the holy place [Ezr. 9:8–9]; and none that were in providence kept still in the captivity [outside the establishment], envying them who in providence were permitted to return; nor those that were returned, forgetting their brethren who were detained in Babylon behind them, but thirsting, praying, and endeavoring for their delivery. But since a second Indulgence unhappily attended with several grievances, what dividings and jarrings have arisen!" "Did not yourselves generally allow of the first Indulgence? counted it a hopeful beginning of good to your poor afflicted Church? (as can be attested). How come ye then now to controvert it? And would ye not yet (as is informed) accept of a general Indulgence? much more of a complete restoration of the Church to her former integrity?" *Balm from Gilead*, pp. 4–5 & 24–25.

Baxter: "I greatly rejoice that in these times of trial, so few of the non-conformable ministers are by sufferings and passions hurried into the dividing extreme." *Second Admonition* (1671), "To those Readers," p. 11. For a fuller sketch of this history from an eye-witness observer, see Wodrow, *History*, 2.497–500.

⁴²⁰ "That God has disposed the king, to restore, in any measure, what was so sinfully taken away, we account it a great blessing, wishing that he may be in such manner satisfied with the fruits of this course as may more and more convince him of its righteousness, and encourage him to its prosecution..." "...my wish, that the Gospel and godliness being by this indulgence advanced, true peaceableness and peace may thence ensue." McWard, *The True Non-Conformist...* ([Amsterdam] 1671), 7th Dialogue, pp. 488 & 492–93.

⁴²¹ McWard, *The Case of the Accommodation Lately Proposed by the Bishop of Dumblane to the Non-Conforming Ministers Examined...* (1671).

⁴²² For instance: "Articles proposed by the Bishop of Glasgow to the dissenting Brethren: 1. That if the dissenting Brethren will come to presbyteries and synods, they shall not only not be obliged to renounce their own private opinion anent Church-government, and swear or subscribe anything thereto, but shall have liberty at their entry to the said meeting to declare and enter it in what form they please. 2. That all Church-affairs shall be managed in presbyteries or synods by the free vote of presbyters, or the major part of them." McWard, *The Case of the Accommodation*, p. 2.

⁴²³ See the original in Wodrow, *History*, 2.203–5.

⁴²⁴ This would largely prevent their larger influence on the people at large and their coordinating with other ministers of a like mind. It also allowed the ministers less ability to escape if the government sought

The first minister in Scotland to publicly speak against the indulgence, according to one contemporary historian, was the recently ordained John Welwood in 1674, who was about 25 years old.⁴²⁵

The two main preserved⁴²⁶ books written against the Indulgence are *The History of the Indulgence... with a Demonstration of the Unlawfulness thereof...* (1678) and *The Banders* (or the Indulged) *Disbanded* (1681), both written by Wamphray.⁴²⁷ Wamphray has been thought to be “the most important [Scottish] theologian of this period” by one coming two hundred years later, assessing written output.⁴²⁸

to cite them. While these limitations were imposed due to the ministers’ previous perceived behavior, and/or to prevent future perceived ills, and may be contested on those accounts, yet that the magistrate has a civil interest and right around where preaching may appropriately take place according to civil edification in his dominion, see ‘[On the Magistrate’s Civil Power Regarding Public Preaching](#)’ at (RBO).

Bairdie: “The act of confinement, being not of a spiritual, but of a civil nature, like imprisonment, however unjust it be, yet we hope ye will not call it Erastianism, nor spiritual supremacy in the magistrate to impose it... We hope ye will not say that it is simply and absolutely unlawful to submit, even to unjust confinement or to observe it for any time, for that were both against Scripture and reason, and to condemn the generation of the righteous who have submitted to the like, yea to more hard and prejudicial sufferings. Did not John the apostle submit to his confinement unto Patmos (Rev. 1 [v. 9])? and Paul to his at Rome, [Acts 28](#) [with [2 Tim. 4:6–7](#)]? Did not your worthy Mr. Robert Bruce submit to his confinement unto Inverness? Others also to theirs in Kintyre, Boot, Arran, etc.? and Mr. David Dickson, to his at Toraff? Mr. Rutherford to his at Aberdeen?” [Balm from Gilead](#), pp. 120–21.

⁴²⁵ “Welwood formed the conviction that any action carried out in obedience to the state in its claims and pretensions over the church was an act of disloyalty to Christ as the church’s head... This found expression in the view, which he was the first to propagate publicly, that those ministers who had accepted the government’s indulgences had, in doing so, recognized the king’s supremacy and, by virtue of that fact, they were disobedient to Christ and had forfeited the right to a hearing [of their preaching].” Grant, *Story of Richard Cameron*, pp. 55, 59. For Welwood’s age, see Patrick Walker, *Six Saints of the Covenant* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1901), 1.206.

Vilant: “only about the time of the second Indulgence [1672], one or two at most of ministers that were ordained before the Revolution [1660], began to drop first more privately, and then more publicly, some seeds of schism among the people who before were profiting under the ministry of the indulged ministers; and then some young men, whose judgments had not been formed at colleges of divinity under orthodox doctors of divinity (which is an unspeakable loss to many well inclined youths) and who were not studied in divinity, were not acquainted with the writings of non-conformists against schism, through a rashness very incident to young men who want experience, did further distemper the poor people...” [Review & Examination](#), pp. 271–72. For a fuller and insightful account of the history about this, see Wodrow, *History*, 2.497–500.

⁴²⁶ References to many tracts on both sides occur in the available literature, which are not now easily, publicly available. If they still exist they would be in manuscript collections buried in European libraries.

⁴²⁷ *Banders Disbanded* is commonly attributed to McWard. However, according to Patrick Walker (1666?–1745?), an early source, Wamphray wrote the work though McWard added a preface; Walker, *Biographia Presbyteriana* (Edinburgh: Speare, 1827), 1.196 & 271. Vilant in 1681 witnessed to this; [Review & Examination](#), pp. 44, 55, 61.

⁴²⁸ James Walker, *The Theology & Theologians of Scotland: Chiefly of the Seventeenth & Eighteenth Centuries* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1872), p. 106.

Yet in 1674 numerous indulged, non-conforming ministers wrote a book defending their taking the Indulgence, and, as with most works written by a group of reformed ministers in that era: it is phenomenal. They show themselves much superior to Wamphray both in pastoral regard and in accuracy and depth of theology. The indulged ministers answered most of Wamphray's arguments before he wrote them. As the work has been connected with John Bairdie, it will be referred to for convenience as "Bairdie".⁴²⁹ After Bairdie, John Vilant, another indulged, non-conforming minister, has the next best work on the topic (1681), in which he fully answers the arguments of Wamphray's *History*.⁴³⁰ Fleming, the pulpit successor to McWard in Holland, also disagreed with Wamphray and answered his main arguments in 1681, with a tender pastoral regard.⁴³¹ The ethos and understanding of Bairdie, Vilant and Fleming, though not altogether the same as those who conformed from the outset in 1662, does much more

⁴²⁹ Bairdie, *Balm from Gilead, or the Differences about the Indulgence Stated & Impleaded in a Sober & Serious Letter to Ministers & Christians in Scotland* (1674; London, 1681). On John Bairdie of Selvadge (†1685), see *Fasti Ecclesiae Scoticae: the Succession of Ministers in the Church of Scotland from the Reformation*, new ed., Hew Scott (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1920–1925), 3.165.

⁴³⁰ Vilant's work, a dialogue, is very long (664 pages): *A Review & Examination of a Book bearing the title of The History of the Indulgence, wherein the lawfulness of the acceptance of the peaceable exercise of the ministry granted by the acts of the magistrate's indulgence is demonstrated, contrary objections answered, and the vindication of such as withdraw from hearing indulged ministers is confuted: to which is added a survey of the mischievous absurdities of the late bond and Sanquhar declaration* (London: Cockerill, 1681). Vilant became a minister in 1656. He was deprived in 1662 and deposed in 1665, "for refusing to submit to Episcopacy." He accepted the first indulgence in 1669 but was deprived again in 1684 "for not informing on some Presbyterians who had passed his church on a Sunday evening the previous June." He returned on the indulgence of 1687 and was a member of the 1690 general assembly, which appointed him to be the principal of New College, St. Andrews. He died in 1693. Vilant is mentioned in *Fasti*, 3.240; 5.201; 7.420–21; 8.718.

A passage of Vilant, not so characteristic of his writing, gives his blunt opinion of Wamphray's *History*: "there are so many things in this *History* which are inconsistent with presbyterian principles and which overturn the very foundation of presbyterian government, and of all government; and there is so much satiric, insolent insulting over his presbyterian brethren, that he had some reason to fear that he would be taken for some other sort of creature than a presbyterian... I cannot but resent the injury which he has done to presbyterians and to their cause in calling himself a presbyterian and then acting the part sometimes of a Pope, and sometimes of a Separatist, and venting extravagant, wild conceits which are contrary to the received tenets of presbyterians;" *Review & Examination*, p. 43.

⁴³¹ Fleming: "since I found it so frequently challenged how any could oppose themselves to what is owned and asserted in that *History of the Indulgence*, as that which they judged enough to answer all; in such a case, I was enforced to touch it a little, though in a very few words, which I design as far as possible, and now in such an unpleasing essay; yet I humbly judge with that evidence of the truth as may show the mistake and invalidity of these grounds on which so strange a superstructure, when seriously pondered and weighed, has been raised; Nor have [I] yet found more urged upon the matter by any on this head than what is made use of there." *Church Wounded*, *Preface*. McWard replied to Fleming's work in the same year: *Epagounismoï, or Earnest Contendings for the Faith* (1681; 1723) 400 pp.

closely approximate the mind of the generality of the Scottish presbyterian ministers than the separatism of Wamphray.

Wamphray's Arguments, 1678

In preface to taking up some of Wamphray's arguments, he in general mistakenly infers, as did most opposed to the indulgence (and those of a similar mindset today), that if there are deficiencies or evils in the indulgence (or any such enactment), then it is sinful to accept those deficiencies and evils.⁴³² However, "evil" is an ambiguous term and may stand for miserable or moral evils.⁴³³ One may morally choose to undergo and suffer certain miserable (though not moral) evils in necessity, other alternatives not being available, likely, reasonable or best. Choosing to eat expired food rather than starve is not wrong, though starving would be.⁴³⁴ That one must have the best or none at all, is against the greater good;⁴³⁵ miserable evils often contain a significant degree of good, and we ought not to choose the worst.⁴³⁶ See Vilant demonstrate these principles regarding holding curtailed Church government, including from the First and Second Scottish

⁴³² Wamphray, *History of the Indulgence*, "Reasons Against the Indulgence", p. 85; idem, *Banders Disbanded*, "From its sinfulness I argue", p. 22.

⁴³³ Bairdie: The indulgence's "straitenedness is the magistrate's fault, but the ministers' affliction only." *Balm from Gilead*, p. 101.

⁴³⁴ Baxter: "This is no better than if you would tell all men they should die rather than eat brown bread, if force take all other [food] from them, because it is unjustly done and they [previously] had possession of better [food]." *Catholic Communion Doubly Defended*, section 5, p. 34.

⁴³⁵ See Fentiman, 'An Impure Church may be Better than a Church with Purer External Ordinances' at 'On Schism & Separatism' (RBO).

⁴³⁶ Bairdie: "And is it such a sin to take part of that liberty till God put it into the heart of the magistrate to grant more? Does *magis et minus variare speciem* [does great or less vary the kind]? Will ye either have all or nothing, and despise a day of small things [*Zech. 4:10*]? (contrary to the saints' humble and good way of old, *Ezra 3:10-11* & *9:8-9*). And will ye cast at the kind because of defect in the measure?" "as his not granting all he should did not make it simply unlawful to grant a part; so who can rationally say that ministers might not take and make use of that part till God should incline him to grant more?..."

But who will say that because in providence others' bonds are not taken off, therefore they should have casten at the mercy of their liberty? or that it was their sin to take hold of it and improve it? no more than it was Pharaoh's butler's fault to accept of his liberty and restoration though the baker and Joseph were left still in prison behind him, *Gen. 40*? Did Joseph quarrel or discharge the butler to accept of his liberty unless all his fellow-prisoners were partakers of the like? no, but only says, 'When it is well with thee, then remember me.' [*Gen. 40:14*]" *Balm from Gilead*, pp. 25 & 101-2.

Vilant: "were it not an advantage to have this freedom which they [the non-indulged] want [lack]? and this they cannot have without the magistrate..." *Review & Examination*, p. 224.

Reformations, Westminster (with her Scottish commissioners) and the London ministers.⁴³⁷ See Bairdie example it just afterward in the Church of Scotland under Cromwell.⁴³⁸

⁴³⁷ Vilant: “[A separating] Farmer: The indulged ministers do not bring forward the whole Reformation with them; they have no presbyteries, synods, general assemblies; they have quit these: Our godly ancestors would have taken nothing except they had gotten all, they would not have quit with a hoof [Ex. 10:26]; and seeing it is so, how should we own them or hear them who are so far degenerate from the zeal of the ministers of Christ who lived in former times?

[Indulged] Minister: This reason, if it were good, would cast [away] all the ministers who are not indulged as well as the indulged; for they want [lack] presbyteries, synods and general assemblies. In the fields or houses where they preach they do not bring the whole frame of presbyterian government along with them where they come to preach; and if you do not disown them, because they want general assemblies, etc. why should you disown indulged ministers upon this account? Will you add affliction to the afflicted? And because the Lord in his righteous judgments has taken away these solemn courts of his House, which were great blessings to the Church, and has scattered his servants, will ye as far as in you lies deprive them of the power of preaching the Gospel because they have not access to the exercise of government? This looks like a judicial infatuation to cast at any remnant of God’s ordinances because ye have not all; does this look like humility? [Hag. 2:3–4] or looks this like the frame of the godly Israelites who, when the stately Temple was ruined, yet took pleasure in the stones of Zion and favored the dust thereof [Ps. 102:14]?

2. General assemblies, synods, presbyteries were taken away long before the indulgence; and therefore 'tis a foolish calumny which has no shadow of likelihood that the indulged ministers, by accepting the indulgence, did quit these courts; for they were quit and gone before the indulgence; the indulged ministers got somewhat of that which they formerly had, liberty to preach without hazard in some places and to keep church-sessions; but they quit nothing when they accepted of that.

3. 'Tis a great wrong done to our ancestors to allege that they were such humorous fools that they would take nothing from the magistrate if he withheld anything which was due to the Church: They did indeed desire all the Church’s privileges, but they took what they could get and made the best use of it in the mean time, till more came.

Although [Bloody] Queen Mary [1553–1558] labored to impose Popery upon the nation and was far from granting all which she should have granted, yet as they who were of the reformed religion were far from scrupling to seek and petition for liberty to their ministers to preach the Gospel, so when these petitions, or any part thereof, was granted, they thankfully accepted of what was granted.

And although King James [1567–1625] and his heirs and successors have a vast supremacy settled upon them (anno 1584, parliament VIII of James VI) and though he exerted that supremacy, yet the ministers, though they found themselves deprived of their privileges which they judged due to the Church, and though several of them were imprisoned, banished for their adhering to these privileges, yet they were always willing to take the liberty of preaching the Gospel when the king granted it; and when they could not get access to their own charges, they did take other charges.

Mr. [Robert] Bruce did not return to Edinburgh, his proper charge, but to Larber: When Mr. Scrimgeour, minister of Kinghorn, was outed, he was so glad when he heard that an honest minister would be permitted to go to his charge, that he said, ‘O to have it but one day old, I would with joy bear him on my back, to have the Gospel preached to my poor people.’ Mr. [John] Welch, a man of God, when he was imprisoned in the castle of Edinburgh for holding the assembly at Aberdeen, he was so far from refusing to take liberty to preach from the king till he repented and restored the Church’s privileges and till the Church got all that was due, that he desires the Lord Ochletree to carry a petition from him to his Majesty intreating for liberty to preach the Gospel: And thus he owned a lawful civil supremacy in the king and sued for its lawful exercise in granting the liberty to preach the Gospel, even when he was suffering upon

the account of his disowning the King's spiritual or vast supremacy. Dr. Sharp, after his banishment returns not to his own charge, but to Edinburgh, when permitted.

In the reign of King Charles I [1625-1649], they begin with a petition to be free of innovations; afterward they petition for an assembly. They were not of that opinion that they would seek or take nothing from the king except he would right all that was wrong in the government and worship at the first.

The famous Assembly of divines which met at Westminster, and composed the Confession of Faith, catechisms, Directory for Worship, etc., when called together by the parliament in the year 1643, they were not only all nominated by the parliament, but the prolocutor was named and chosen to them by ordinance of parliament; also they were limited so as to meddle only with the exercise of dogmatic power, and that only in such matters as should from time to time be proposed to them by the parliament; and in case of difference among themselves, they were to receive directions from the houses of parliament; and beside many other things that ordinance of the Lords and Commons provides in the close that they in that Assembly shall not assume to exercise any jurisdiction, power or authority ecclesiastical whatsoever, or any other power than is herein particularly expressed. Yet these divines did not refuse to sit because of the limitations and restraints, although diverse of these cannot but be looked on as encroaching too much upon that Assembly's liberty:

As also the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland did approve of the said Assembly, sent their commissioners to it, who took the oath of the Assembly, and their sitting in that Assembly was approved, as the printed acts of our Assembly do fully bear." [Review & Examination](#), pp. 21-25.

Vilant then quotes a [three page document](#) "agreed upon by the ministers of London and Westminster" when "they resolved to put the presbyterian government in execution upon the ordinance of parliament" (1646), making known upon what principles they acted. Amongst much other directly relevant material: "in case the magistrate be not fully informed as to set up a right and perfect rule in every particular, the Church-officers may act under that rule, provided they do not subscribe to, nor otherwise acknowledge that rule to be entire and right in all points; and therefore for these particular ordinances, although we humbly conceive they do not hold forth a complete rule, nor are in all points satisfactory to our consciences, yet because we find many things established in them, agreeable to the Word of God, for which we desire heartily to bless God and to be thankful to the honorable House, provision being made for enabling of the elderships...

We conceive it is our duty to begin to act, in reference to Church-government by congregational, classical, provincial and national assemblies; resolving by the grace of God, to walk in all things according to the Word, and according to the ordinances, so far as we conceive them correspondent to it, and to be countable to the magistrate wheresoever he shall call us thereto;" [Review & Examination](#), pp. 26-29.

Shortly after in 1648 the parliament, while civilly enacting a more developed presbyterianism in that year, reserved to itself to determine appeals from the national ecclesiastical assembly, which the ministers acquiesced to. Bairdie: "what hinders, but ye and your brethren might take the benefit of its favorable acts, notwithstanding it lodges in the same Crown with the other?... As was in that ordinance of the English parliament, anno [1648] — for setting up of Presbyterian government, with reservation of appeals from the Church-judicatories to the [civil] parliament." [Balm from Gilead](#), p. 64. See "[August 1648: An Ordinance for The Form of Church Government to be used in the Church of England and Ireland, agreed upon by the Lords and Commons assembled in Parliament, after Advice, had with the Assembly of Divines](#)" in *Acts & Ordinances of the Interregnum, 1642-1660*, ed. C.H. Firth & R.S. Rait (London, 1911).

⁴³⁸ Bairdie: "Must ye have all or will ye take nothing? Yea, and count it an unpardonable crime to accept of a day of small things [[Zech. 4:10](#)], till God incline the hearts of rulers to condescend to further? Had it been unlawful to Zerubabel, to have accepted a considerable part of the vessels of the Temple, if the other part had been kept back [[Dan. 5:2-3](#); [Ezra 1:7-11](#); [5:14-15](#)]? By this ground was not Ezra in a mistake when he blessed God for a nail in the Holy Place ([Ezra 9 \[v. 8\]](#))? And was not your own Church [of Scotland] far out when in the late Usurper's [Cromwell's] time [in 1653 to 1658] and afterwards, her liberty of general assemblies was broken, yet kept synods, presbyteries and sessions, holding fast what of her liberty she could while the other part was infringed?... Were Christ's clothes taken from Him, what forbids but ye might lawfully receive back his coat to put upon Him until ye get his cloak also?" [Balm from Gilead](#), pp. 104-5.

In particular, Wamphray argues the indulgence was sinful: “1. In that hereby they declared they did not hold their ministry wholly and solely of Jesus Christ,” in that Hutcheson, while saying in his speech they received their ministry from Christ, did not say from Christ “alone”.⁴³⁹ Yet, such an argument condemns Christ Himself, who, in speaking of his mission, person and authority, and in testifying to the truth in the face of opposition at his trial before an Erastian civil governor, before receiving a sinful sentence that He accepted (Jn. 19:17), confesses the truth in a more indirect and less explicit way and does not say “alone”.⁴⁴⁰ The omission of something, especially out of prudence or other greater-good reasons (such as Christ had), is not the denial of it.⁴⁴¹ If Hutcheson had said he received his ministry from Christ alone, it would have been a palpable falsehood, as the ministry is also from the Father and Holy Spirit (Acts 13:2, 4; 20:28; Gal. 1:1),⁴⁴² not to mention derivatively from presbytery (Acts 13:1–3; 14:23; Col. 4:17; 1 Tim. 4:14, or the consent of Church governors).⁴⁴³

Wamphray: “2... the prerogative of Christ as sole Head of his Church is further encroached upon, in that the indulged do hold their ministry, as to its exercise, not of Christ alone, but of the magistrates, either solely or in conjunction with Christ.”⁴⁴⁴ Rutherford, the London presbyterians during Westminster’s era, Bolton and Baxter, however, and the indulged ministers Bairdie (citing a standard, presbyterian Dutch

⁴³⁹ Wamphray, *History of the Indulgence*, “Reasons Against the Indulgence”, p. 85. See Fleming argue against Wamphray on this point: *Church Wounded*, §2, p. 14.

⁴⁴⁰ Jn. 8:14, “Jesus answered and said unto them, ‘Though I bear record of myself, yet my record is true: for I know whence I came, and whither I go; but ye cannot tell whence I come, and whither I go.’” Jn. 8:23, “And he said unto them, Ye are from beneath; I am from above: ye are of this world; I am not of this world.” Jn. 8:42, “Jesus said unto them, ‘If God were your Father, ye would love me: for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me.’” Jn. 18:36–37, “Jesus answered, ‘My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence.’ Pilate therefore said unto him, ‘Art thou a king then?’ Jesus answered, ‘Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice.’”

⁴⁴¹ Vilant: “What? shall ministers be condemned as not faithful because they spoke of their ministry in the words that the Holy Ghost taught Paul to speak, Acts 20:24 [“the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus”]. Shall the using of the words of God be judged a betraying of the cause of God?” *Review & Examination*, p. 133.

⁴⁴² So Vilant, *Review & Examination*, pp. 140–41.

⁴⁴³ See ‘The Implicit or Tacit Consent of Church Governors is Sufficient for the Power of Being an Office-Bearer’ at ‘On an Extraordinary Calling’ (RBO).

⁴⁴⁴ Wamphray, *History of the Indulgence*, “Reasons Against the Indulgence,” p. 86. Bairdie: “the act of indulgence presupposes their power and right to preach, etc. and that they have a ministry and intrinsic right to exercise all its parts, antecedently to that indulged liberty; but no way confers a new copy-hold of their ministry: Only it says the exercise thereof was under a civil inhibition or legal restraint, which this indulgence takes off.” *Balm from Gilead*, p. 56.

divine) and Vilant rightly distinguished that while the magistrate does not give the spiritual power to the Church, yet he does give to her the civil ability to exercise her spiritual power in a civil and peaceable way.⁴⁴⁵ Fleming assumed and wrote from the

⁴⁴⁵ Rutherford: "The question is not whether the power of exercising [Church] discipline be from the magistrate, I mean in a free and peaceable manner, with freedom from violence of men: we grant that power, and by proportion also, that exercise of discipline is from him: But whether the intrinsical power be not immediately from Christ given to the Church; this we teach, as the power of sailing peaceably from danger of pirates and robbers is from the king, but the art of navigation is not from the king." *Divine Right*, ch. 23, p. 504.

London Provincial Assembly: "It is not an arbitrary illimited government, but bounded and limited:... 2. By the civil magistrate, in regard of the exercise of it. For we acknowledge ourselves (as we have said) accountable to the civil magistrate, to punish us with civil mulcts [fines], if we abuse our power." *Vindication of Presbyterian-Government*, p. 24.

Bolton: "The Church has the exercise of her power from him, but not the power itself: the magistrate gives ability, but does not give the authority: The Church, say divines, has protection and encouragement from him, but has her authority and power from Christ." *Arraignment of Error*, p. 314.

Baxter: "as to a general license, I will thank the king for it, yea, or any man that has power to hinder me, that he will give me leave to preach and exercise my office: But I do not think that every man that does not hinder me when he can, does give me power... And a prince may give a license to exercise the ministry to which we were ordained." *A Treatise of Episcopacy*... (London: Simmons, 1681), ch. 5, pp. 81-82.

Bairdie: "Now as to this sort of dependance which ministers have upon the magistrate, in the actual discharge of their office, for clearing thereof, distinguish next between the exercise of the ministry simply and in itself considered, and the circumstances of that exercise: Or distinguish subordination into that which is absolute and that which is only *secundum quid*, or in some certain respects. Now, as by this indulgence your ministers do not depend upon the prince essentially and derivatively as to their office and authority, and matter of their embassy; so neither simply and absolutely for the exercise of it (both these they have and hold immediately of Christ alone), but only and merely in regard of the circumstance and adjunct of the peaceableness and legal immunity of the public exercise of it in such and such places of his realm: Even as the exercise of the protestant religion, being authorized by law, depends upon him; and as the exercise of your ministry within any family depends upon the master of the family.

And yourselves in your papers upon this subject acknowledge this kind of subordination and dependance (viz. in respect of the public, free, peaceable exercise of the ministry) to be not unlawful. To this [William] Apollonius also accords, [*Jus majestatis circa sacra*, 1642] part last [pp. 249-51], §2, ch. 3. Neither is it to be thought that this does subject the ministry, but the man; not the function, but the person, to the civil power, except it be (as some of yourselves say) *in obliquo*, indirectly and objectively, even as the other matters of God are, being objects about which his imperative and coercive power is conversant...

[The indulged] consequently are Christ's ambassadors and sent-servants still, even as you are; only they have the peaceableness and civil freedom of the public exercise of their function from the ruler: a thing they were and are bound to pray for, 1 Tim. 2:1-2, that under him they 'may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty;' and consequently, or by parity of reason, in the exercise of their ministry. And if this may and should be prayed for, as it is his duty to grant it, so it cannot be their crime to accept it." *Balm from Gilead*, pp. 89-91.

Vilant: "They have their ministerial calling, or which is all one, authority to exercise the acts of their ministerial office, from Jesus Christ, as the fountain of their spiritual power... But they have the peaceable, public exercise of their ministry in these places by the magistrate, under God. It's the magistrate's civil authority by which the penal statutes which rendered their preaching hazardous are removed or relaxed; by the protection of civil authority they have the peaceable exercise of their ministry, or they have freedom from molestation or disturbance while they are exercising their ministry in these places. Before the act of indulgence they had their ministerial authority and did preach upon hazard before they were indulged;

truth of this distinction.⁴⁴⁶ While the magistrate may certainly err in his judgment about the civil, peaceable exercise of the Church ministry, yet it is within his legitimate jurisdiction. Further, the imposing of sinful restrictions is one thing, but using the advantage of the magistrate lifting these restrictions in some measure is quite another.

Wamphray: “4... [those] who receive the [ministerial] office or its exercise [by magistrates], as a medium of conveyance, say that Christ is not sole Head of the Church...”⁴⁴⁷ If there were not a difference between a material and formal medium of conveyance of the exercise of Christ’s ministry,⁴⁴⁸ then it would have been sinful for Jeremiah to exercise his ministry, as he did in that broken and declining Church, after King Zedekiah let him out of prison ([Jer. 37:15–17](#)). And how could Paul and Silas wait for the permission of the jailor to come out of the jail when the angel had set them free ([Acts 16:23–30](#))? Christ is the head of his people and officers immediately, even with respect to the formal conveyance of their spiritual power and authority,⁴⁴⁹ irrespective of whatever external, material means, civil or otherwise, might be involved therein (though

but by the indulgence they had this benefit, that whereas before it they were exposed to hazard wherever they preached, whether in private or public; after it, they might preach publicly and exercise the other parts of the ministerial office, in some places, without molestation.” [Review & Examination](#), pp. 12–13.

⁴⁴⁶ Fleming, *Church Wounded*, §3, p. 25.

⁴⁴⁷ Wamphray, *History*, “[Reasons Against the Indulgence](#)”, p. 87.

⁴⁴⁸ Vilant: “I am astonished to read these papers that are going up and down amongst the people, wherein... the indulged ministers are represented as having acknowledged and homologate[d] a formal ecclesiastic supremacy assumed by the magistrate, and having subjected their ministry in a direct line of subordination unto his cognizance (as inferior civil courts are unto the superior)...”

“That addition [by Wamphray] of the words ‘upon the matter’ [‘the indulged ministers renounced’], is but a mere blind; it may beguile simple people, but no judicious person will be deceived by it, seeing there is nothing either in the matter or form of what these ministers said or did which does import any such thing as that historian alleges; and although these ministers had said nothing of their receiving their ministry from Christ, etc. before the Council, it had been a very uncharitable construction to have construed their silence to be a renunciation of their dependance on Christ, etc. but it’s a horrid injury to charge them with the renunciation of that which they expressly own before the magistrate.” [Review & Examination](#), pp. 5 & 12.

⁴⁴⁹ Rutherford: “5th Conclusion. The office bearers of the Church have the power of the keys and their office immediately from Christ, by the immediation of free gift: they have their offices from the Church, by the mediation of orderly designation;” “There is a twofold primacy... One whereby a number of believers is the first mystical body of Christ, immediately united to Christ, as a mystical body to the head... There is another primacy or principality ministerial, whereby such a number of men are the first subject of the keys, having power of binding and loosing, first and immediately from Christ...” *Peaceable & Temperate Plea*, [ch. 1](#), p. 7; [ch. 3](#), p. 31. “There is a power of the keys to bind and loose, given immediately by Christ to all the rulers of the catholic or universal Church visible;” *Due Right*, pt. 1, [ch. 10](#), p. 333. See Rutherford’s fuller discussion in *Due Right*, pt. 1, [ch. 10](#), pp. 383–85. For whatever differences of opinion there were between non-Erastian presbyterians on how authority was conveyed amongst varied levels of Church courts, that did not alter that they were agreed upon the Church’s immediate reception of Christ’s authority.

by the backsliding of others), lest any thing, means or power on earth could separate and cut us off from Christ, his love and the influx of his spiritual power, which is absurd (Rom. 8:35-39; Eph. 1:22-23; 4:10-12; 5:23; Col. 1:18). Bairdie gave further Scriptural examples:

“Were the priests and Levites in Hezekiah's days guilty of this charge, because they had, by the magistrate's authority, access to their service of the Temple, and did make use of the same [2 Chron. 29:4-5, 11, 15-16; 31:2-4]? Was their office altered or innovated and quite spoiled thereby, as if they renounced their dependance upon God, their Lord and Head, and Master, and subjected their function to the civil ruler, and took it holden of him, because of his supervenient civil liberty granted them?

Or were the Levites subordinate to Jehoshaphat, like other civil judges, because of his, not only permitting, but appointing them to go preach through the land [2 Chron. 17:7-9; 19:8-10]?”⁴⁵⁰

You say, “But these were righteous kings, not backslidden ones.” Vilant responds:

“The backsliding of rulers makes them not incapable of doing good afterward. Manasseh had been religiously educated and became monstrously wicked, and yet was an instrument of reformation afterward; and Judah did not refuse to serve the Lord, because Manasseh, who had so fearfully fallen away, did command them to serve the Lord, 2 Chron. 33:16.”⁴⁵¹

“But Manasseh repented.” Vilant:

“But do ye think that if he had commanded Judah to serve God or the Lord's priests to sacrifice to the Lord before he repented that these commands should have been rejected because he was not truly penitent? It's the duty of all kings, whether they be penitent or not, to command the Lord's ministers and people to serve God.”⁴⁵²

⁴⁵⁰ Bairdie, *Balm from Gilead*, pp. 87-88. Bairdie gives the analogy: “like an ambassador getting a pass from another prince to pass through or stay in his territories without let [being prevented] or molestation; or to discharge his embassy within that dominion unto some certain persons he is sent unto. Does that ambassador, by taking this safe conduct or leave of the prince of the bounds, quit his own proper master and take commission-power of that other prince? No, no... as if an ambassador of another king or state were sent to your king, or any part of his people, albeit in his authority and embassy he depend not upon your king, but allanerly upon his own master; yet is it not in your king's power, and depends upon him, whether he will admit him in his territories to discharge that message? or when and where he shall have audience, etc.?... All he can take from them is what he gives, viz. his own civil toleration.” *Balm from Gilead*, pp. 89-91.

⁴⁵¹ Vilant, *Review & Examination*, p. 594.

⁴⁵² *Ibid.* The issue here is WCF 23.4, “Infidelity or difference in religion doth not make void the magistrate's just and legal authority, nor free the people from their due obedience to him (1 Pet 2:13-14, 16),

Vilant then gives a fascinating and powerful example of these exact issues occurring with Athanasius and emperor Julian the Apostate in the early Church.⁴⁵³ Bairdie gives more Scriptural instances:

“Does not the Lord Himself direct Moses ([Ex. 3:18](#) with [5:1, 3](#)) to desire leave even of Pharaoh to let Israel to go and sacrifice to their God in the wilderness... Not that their liberty did depend absolutely and *quo ad jus ad rem* [as to the right to the thing], or in point of right, upon Pharaoh's good will; but such respect would the Lord put upon the magistrate's leave, though a tyrant and oppressor: and to teach all men how desirable it is to have the permission and allowance of authority to the free exercise of religion, if it can be obtained; therefore would the Lord have this liberty intreated for. And did not Moses and all Israel accept this liberty when it was granted? [Ex. 12:31](#). Or did any blame him for seeking and accepting it?...

See how Paul did obtest the very heathen governor for this favor, [Acts 21:39](#), ‘I beseech thee’ (says he) ‘suffer me to speak to the people’: And when he gave him license, he made use of it and preached... and did not Paul ([Acts 28:30–31](#)) preach for some years at Rome upon a negative permission, ‘no man forbidding him’ [[Acts 28:16, 31](#)], viz. neither emperor nor senate... And [Acts 26:1](#), upon a positive permission, he not only apologized, but preached to Agrippa...

And who can deny but that Cyrus, Darius, and Artaxerxes, their grants of liberty (recorded by Ezra) to go up to Jerusalem and build the House of the Lord and offer sacrifice, etc. there was a mercy and more valuable than for the children of the captivity to have gone up and done this at their own hand? And

from which ecclesiastical persons are not exempted ([1 Kn. 2:35](#); [Acts 25:9–11](#); [Rom 13:1](#); [2 Pet 2:1, 10–11](#); [Jude 1:8–11](#));”

⁴⁵³ Vilant: “The orthodox ministers who had been banished in the time of the [Arian](#) persecution, and [Athanasius](#) [c. 296–298 – 373] among the rest, did not refuse to return to the exercise of their ministry upon the edict of [Julian the Apostate](#) [in 362], who had been a professed Christian, and turned pagan, and a despicable enemy and mocker of Christ; and though he made that edict for ill ends, yet these godly zealous servants of God made use of it. Ye may read the history in Sozomen's *Church History*, bk. 5, [ch. 5](#)—where he shows that he afflicted the Church in all things most bitterly and grievously, except that he recalled the bishops and priests which were banished in the time of [Constantius \[II\]](#) [in 356]; and that it was said he gave not that command out of mercy or pity, but that either they by their mutual contentions might fight against the Church by an intestine war and so fall away from their own laws and institutions, or that he might wrong the estimation of [Constantius \[II\]](#), and might raise up hatred against him through the whole empire, etc.

And [Georgius Hornius](#) [1620–1670] in his *Ecclesiastic History*, [p. 93](#), says that Julian recalled Athanasius from banishment to the place of one George, an Arian, a most naughty man, who had been slain a little before Athanasius's return. There is no man more famous for learning and zeal, and steadfastness in the Church history than Athanasius; and I am sure, if ye have read the [History of Julian the Apostate](#) [vol. 1, 2], ye will be ashamed to say that any of our rulers are so ill as he was, and yet none of these holy and learned ministers made any scruple to obey his command when he called them to the work of their ministry. If many would compare their practices with the Scripture-rule and examples in Scripture and in Church history, they would find that what they take for light and zeal is but ignorance and a humorous peevishness.” [Review & Examination](#), pp. 595–596.

is this your like piece of liberty, though of a lesser size, not at all to be embraced? What would the Protestants in Hungary and Spain [who are more confined] esteem of the like favor?"⁴⁵⁴

Wamphray: "9. There were among these instructions given by the [civil] Council several restrictions and limitations in and about the administration of Christ's spiritual institutions... The receivers therefore of this indulgence... do contribute their concurrence unto this invasion."⁴⁵⁵ If an approving versus a permissive concurrence cannot be distinguished, Wamphray, by inference (Lord forgive him), condemns God (Num. 22:20-22; 1 Sam. 8:7-9; 1 Kn. 22:22-23; Job 1:12; Eze. 20:25-26; Jn. 19:11; 2 Thess. 2:10-12), Christ (Mt. 8:31-32; 17:25-27; 26:45-46, 52-54; Mk. 5:12-13; Lk. 22:31-32; Jn. 13:27), the prophets (1 Sam. 8:19-20; 1 Kn. 22:14-16; 2 Kn. 5:18-19; Mt. 19:8), the righteous (Lk. 15:12), himself and could not live in everyday society.⁴⁵⁶ Notice in most of these examples the permission is expressed in a form positively put forth (in a broken and declining Church). Not only is such a positive-putting-forth by human convention, but it is also often materially necessary (especially in light of due order, which is from God,

⁴⁵⁴ Bairdie, *Balm from Gilead*, pp. 22-24. Ames: "His answer [that of John Robinson, a Separatist] is that the very obtaining and receiving of such a license is unlawful, because it is a real acknowledgement that such a bishop has a lawful power to grant it. Which [in my judgment] is neither so nor so, for: 1. The asking and receiving of leave or license (which are both one) does not always imply an acknowledgement of his lawful authority from whom it is sought.

If any man of violence shall usurp a power to himself, of permitting or hindering the lawful and good offices that pertain unto honest men, so that without his license a man could not buy or sell, or teach any science or trade of life; if an honest man whom these duties concern, should in that case take a license from that usurper (though he were no better than a strong thief) no reasonable man will say that in so doing he did acknowledge such [an] usurped power [to be] lawful.

The rulers of Jewish synagogues had no lawful power over the apostles of Christ in any part of their ministry, neither would Paul ever acknowledge so much: yet he and Barnabas accepted of such license or leave from them sometime as they did usually grant unto those that acknowledged themselves lawfully subject to their authority. See an example, *Acts 13:15*.

Mr. Robinson himself has granted in the first demand that a man may preach by leave in a parochial assembly: which leave must be given by the parochial minister and church-wardens, whose authority he holds one with the bishops. If therefore leave or license (whether in word or writing, that is all one) may be lawfully taken from them, without acknowledging any authority lawful which is unlawful, why not from the bishop?" *A Second Manuduction for Mr. [John] Robinson. Or a Confirmation of the Former in an Answer to his Manumission* (Amsterdam, 1615), p. 6.

⁴⁵⁵ Wamphray, *History, "Reasons Against the Indulgence"*, p. 89.

⁴⁵⁶ See 'On the Effective Permission of Sin' at 'How did the First Human Sin Happen' (RBO) and 'On Concurrence, Secondary Causation & Occasionalism' (RBO).

1 Cor. 14:33, 40).⁴⁵⁷ John Owen in England wrote a letter and tract in favor of and pleading for an indulgence.⁴⁵⁸

⁴⁵⁷ See Fentiman, "Voting: Not a Complete Approval, may be a Tolerated Consent" in "Theses on the Ethics of Civil Voting, with a Correction to the Booklet, Christ Centered Voting" at 'On Voting' (RBO).

Vilant: "The first magistrate that Israel had to do with was a grievous oppressor of the Lord's people and an idolater, and an insolent despiser of God who makes nothing of God: 'Who is the Lord that I should obey his voice and let Israel go? I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go:' And yet the Lord sends Moses and Aaron to him to desire him to let Israel go to serve Him in the wilderness; and after he has given that blasphemous, insolent answer, full of tempting of God, they insist humbly to pray him to let them go, Ex. 5:1-3. And they are many times after sent by the Lord to Pharoah with the same desire. It were easy to multiply instances of this nature, but this one is sufficient; here are frequent addresses made by the Lord's servants to a most godless, atheistical blasphemer and persecutor of the Lord's people, and that in a religious matter: it's for liberty to go and worship God."

"The paying of money to the clerks [related to the Scottish third Indulgence of 1679]... These clerks seek it not by the prelates' authority, but upon the [civil] council's appointment, backed with charges of horning [being declared a rebel and having civil protections taken away]; and whether it be rather eligible to [choose to] pay a little money, or to be put to the horn and taken with caption, let any sober person judge." "the traveler would not be guilty of the abusing of the money to maintain robbers; he gives it not for that end, but to preserve his life; and gives a part to preserve the rest." *Review & Examination*, pp. 65-66, 228, 603.

Vilant paraphrasing Ascham: "'Herein I am but morally passive, as a man that is fallen into the hands of a pack of bloody thieves, and being demanded it, takes his purse out of his pocket and delivers it to them; though with his own hand... he puts his purse into their hands, yet the law calls that not a gift, nor excuses the thief for taking it, but all contrary; or a man apprehended by a party of the invading enemies or usurper's army, walks or rides along with them to their muster or battle, when as he cannot escape them; and otherways they would draw him.'" *Review & Examination*, p. 605; Ascham, *A Discourse, wherein is Examined what is Particularly Lawful during the Confusions & Revolutions of Government, or How far a man may conform to the powers and commands of those who hold kingdoms divided by civil or foreign wars...* (London, 1648), p. 36. One might also consider Christ carrying his cross to his crucifixion.

⁴⁵⁸ Owen: "there is no nation under heaven wherein such an indulgence or toleration as is desired would be more welcome, useful, acceptable, or more subservient to tranquility, trade, wealth and peace." "Indulgence & Toleration" in *The Works of John Owen*, ed. William Goold (NY: Robert Carter, 1852), 13.540; *idem*, "A Peace-Offering, in an Apology & Humble Plea for Indulgence & Liberty of Conscience by sundry Protestants differing in some things from the present establishment about the worship of God" in *Works*, 13.541-74.

The 3rd Indulgence & Wamphray's Arguments

While Wamphray's arguments in *Banders Disbanded* (1681)⁴⁵⁹ about the third indulgence (1679)⁴⁶⁰ are no better, yet for some thoroughness and (more importantly) your learning, they will be sampled. This indulgence had some more obvious and acute disadvantages, making it less popular to be received; and it was short lived.⁴⁶¹ "Nevertheless," Wodrow says, the "presbyterian ministers" meeting around Edinburgh for "the most part agreed it was lawful and expedient, if matters turned not worse, to give in bonds" to become indulged.⁴⁶² I will leave the indulgence's expediency undetermined (as better fit to be determined by those who took it).⁴⁶³ As for Wamphray, he first argues for the indulgence's sinfulness, then its scandalousness, then its inconveniencies. As scandal may be overridden by moral necessity⁴⁶⁴ and

⁴⁵⁹ Wamphray, *The Banders Disbanded, or an Accurate Discourse Solidly & Plainly Demonstrating how Inconvenient, Scandalous & Sinful it is, in the present circumstances of the Church of Scotland, for ministers of Christ there, that they may obtain a pretended liberty to preach and administer the sacraments, in such and such particular parishes, to give bond to their present rulers, that they shall live peaceably... holding forth many considerable truths very necessary to be known and pondered in these dark and difficult times* (1681).

⁴⁶⁰ Wodrow, *History*, 3.149 & 155.

⁴⁶¹ For the disadvantages especially see Wodrow, *History*, 3.155.

⁴⁶² *Ibid.*

⁴⁶³ Fleming: "7. That there is now need of more close correspondence and personal freedom with greatest tenderness to be managed in this present difference with others, since they may thus tear one another at a distance before they understand them, and that prejudice thus entertained with personal reflections and alienating of affection must necessarily tend on every hand to widen the breach." *Church Wounded*, §1, p. 2.

Bairdie: "For our part we cannot see how their preaching with the magistrate's tolerance and leave can be a pillar and prop to his ecclesiastical supremacy, more nor your preaching without his [jurisdictional] leave is. If ye fancy any accidental influence that may redound from theirs to uphold it, as ye can hardly name that, so may not the like be found to flow from yours by its occasioning the settling of a military force to maintain the supremacy and the hierarchy depending thereupon and to suppress your liberty? which is the States' fault, we grant, yet by you occasioned." "How many of the outed ministers lie by in corners, less extensive in their usefulness to the Church than the Indulged?"

"why then have the prelates and their friends such an antipathy against it [the indulgence]? Do not all know it was granted... sore against their mind?... Did not many of them say it was the high way to break, undermine and wear out their government? Thinking that as Dagon could not stand before the ark, neither prelacy beside any little of presbytery without losing ground daily? Did they not exclaim against it as a reviving, perpetuating and riveting the presbyterian interest, which they thought had been quite broken and buried?" *Balm from Gilead*, pp. 70, 124 & 132-33.

⁴⁶⁴ See 'Occasioning Passive Scandal may be Warranted & Justified by a Necessary or Higher Good' at 'On Scandal & Offenses' (RBO).

inconveniencies by the greater good, only some of Wamphray's arguments for the indulgence's objective sinfulness will be highlighted.

Wamphray argues, "2. If the Council's act or grant... be sinful, then the giving of this bond [by the indulged]... must be much more sinful..."⁴⁶⁵ Yet it is plain, though an authority sin in giving commands, it is not necessarily sinful for one to keep, or promise to keep, those commands (otherwise there would be no such thing as passive obedience,⁴⁶⁶ but there is).⁴⁶⁷ Baxter had previously, rightly argued at length⁴⁶⁸ against the view Wamphray puts forth; Baxter's position was precisely the indulged ministers' viewpoint.⁴⁶⁹ Saul unjustly required 100 Philistine foreskins for David to marry his daughter. David gave 200 (1 Sam. 18:17-27) and could have promised to do so in that

⁴⁶⁵ Wamphray, *Banders Disbanded*, "From its sinfulness", p. 23.

⁴⁶⁶ See 'On Passive Obedience' (RBO).

⁴⁶⁷ Wamphray affirms the principle of passive obedience later in the same book (albeit in very limited circumstances): "there may be some cases wherein it is lawful for a people to yield subjection to a lawless tyrant, and wherein it may be unlawful for them to perpetrate or attempt their own liberation by external force... viz. when the thing attempted is either altogether impracticable, the means or manner of effectuating it dubious or unwarrantable, the timing of it inexpedient and unseasonable, or the necessary *concomitans* or consequents of the cure [be] more hurtful or dangerous then the disease, or the like... there is a time which may be called the proper season of suffering, that is, when suffering (in opposition to acting or resisting) is a necessary and indispensable duty." *Banders Disbanded*, "Thirdly from the many inconveniences," pp. 47-48.

It appears nearly all the noncompliant ministers in 1662 voluntarily left their parishes in passive obedience, apart from physical coercion: Vos, *Scottish Covenanters*, p. 84; Walker, *Biographia Presbyteriana*, 1.261-62; M'Crie, *Story of the Scottish Church*, pp. 269-73. Vilant: "the ministers who went to Holland [McWard and Wamphray], who did not only passively submit to banishment, but also by their subscription engaged not to return." *Review & Examination*, p. 597.

Bairdie: "ye [non-indulged ministers] did all unanimously submit to the magistrates outing you of your charges by his banishing you therefrom, as Solomon did Abiathar [1 Kn. 2:26-27] (though here it was just, but in your case undeserved)... If ye say it was your fault to submit to his ejecting you, and therefore no argument can be drawn from it to allow his reponing you, beside that herein ye condemn yourselves and the rest of the generation of the righteous in Scotland, England and Ireland (and much may be said from Scripture and reason to justify that submission), we humbly beg further to be informed, if ye repent of it, where is your confession? and where are the fruits of your repentance? Why do you not go to your charges again, but persist in submission to your ejection?"

"Will you say, because ye were outed of your charges by the magistrate's interdict of the Act at Glasgow, anno 1662, or other the like, and did cede thereunto, that therefore you did hold your ministry of him (like other judges and officers of State) and were deprived of it by him? If not, what more does your [indulged] brethren's civil license state them in subordination unto and dependance upon him than your quitting of your charges at his command did you? For, outing and ining of ministers seems to be of the same category and to argue a like dependance." *Balm from Gilead*, pp. 25-26 & 88.

⁴⁶⁸ Baxter, *Five Disputations*, 5th Disputation, ch. 12, "It may be very sinful to command some ceremonies, when yet it may be the subjects' duty to use them when they are commanded," pp. 460-63.

⁴⁶⁹ Bairdie: "your indulged ministers, looking upon these statuted rules, at least ways, as unjust upon their matter, have never embraced nor observed them, except it be in some civil points (inflicted on them as penal), and that only so far as they judged might be lawfully submitted unto, however unjustly imposed." *Balm from Gilead*, p. 77.

broken and declining Church. The king of Babylon sinfully exacted from king Zedekiah of Israel an oath to serve him. Zedekiah broke this oath and would not serve him in that broken and declining Church-state. God condemned Zedekiah for it, seeing as he should have kept the sinfully exacted service ([Eze. 17:11-19](#)).⁴⁷⁰

The magistrates sinfully required Christ to pay an Erastian, tribute tax upon the Church ([Mt. 17:24-27](#)). Christ, speaking of his example as a precedent for all his disciples for all history, chose the lesser material evil (or rather fulfilled the highest good attainable), submitted to this bondage, here declined the exercise of his (and our) Christian liberty and publicly gave that bond while verbally testifying privately (not publicly) that He was not so subject ([Mt. 17:24-27](#)).⁴⁷¹ Is this a *protestatio contraria facto*, “a protestation contrary to fact,” as the non-indulged censured the indulged with?⁴⁷² Did Jesus compromise his authority or the exercise of his ministry? Pilate’s court sinfully determined Christ to be crucified ([Jn. 19:15-16](#)). Christ willingly took up his cross ([Jn. 19:17](#)); He had power to lay down his own life ([Jn. 10:15](#)), as we do ([Jn. 15:13](#)), for his sheep. Therefore the Father loves Him ([Jn. 10:17](#)).

Wamphray argues: “5. Seeing the terms of this bond [include], “to live peaceably”... by this bond he is either obliged to live peaceably in the imposer’s [sense] which is the sinful sense... or in another sense inconsistent with that of the imposer... If the latter, then it must be deep dissimulation (and consequently sinful)...”⁴⁷³ This does not follow. The sense may be the natural, objective societal meaning of the words themselves,⁴⁷⁴ even in and with respect to the particular circumstances (as Wamphray presses).

⁴⁷⁰ See ‘Vows Sinfully Imposed & Taken in a Sinful Manner Bind’ at ‘On Oaths & Vows’ (RBO).

⁴⁷¹ See ‘On the Ethics of Paying Specific Taxes designated to a Corrupt Purpose or Imposed by a Usurped Authority or Usurper’ and ‘On the Ethics of Paying the Scottish Cess Near & During the Killing Times’ at ‘On Paying Taxes’ (RBO).

⁴⁷² Wodrow, *History*, 2.179 & 492. Was the protest God told Samuel to make against the people’s desires having their own human king contrary to the fact when Samuel, per God’s direction, facilitated, anointed and enthroned king Saul for them? ([1 Sam. 8:9](#))

⁴⁷³ Wamphray, *Banders Disbanded*, “From its sinfulness”, pp. 23-24.

⁴⁷⁴ Westminster Confession of Faith 22.4: “An oath is to be taken in the plain and common sense of the words...” Francis Rouse, a Westminster divine: “And as in language the ordinary acception of a word is to be taken for the meaning, so that meaning is to be understood as most proper to have been taken in an oath. (Alsted, *Theological Cases*, ch. 15, [rule 2] §13 [p. 273])” [The Lawfulness of Obeying the Present Government...](#) (London, 1649), p. 14.

Christopher Love, an English presbyterian: “I did not declare that for which I was condemned was a sin against God... they condemned me for treason, yet my conscience did not tell me that it was a sin against God which they counted treason.” [A Clear & Necessary Vindication of the Principles & Practices](#)

But you say the adversaries will construe it otherwise:⁴⁷⁵ Our Judge is the Lord (Rom. 14:8), not men. The court accused Jeremiah that he had “prophesied against this city” of Jerusalem (Jer. 26:11), which was true, though the words were bent to the sinful sense of the imposer. Jeremiah affirmed the natural, objective, societal meaning of the words and denied the imposer’s sinful sense, saying:

“The Lord sent me to prophesy... against this city... I am in your hand: do with me as seemeth good and meet unto you. But know ye for certain, that if ye put me to death, ye shall surely bring innocent blood upon yourselves...” (Jer. 26:12, 14–15)

Likewise, the Jewish court had serious, corrupt misconceptions about the Messiah’s characteristics and what “son of God” means (Mt. 22:41–46; Lk. 4:22–28; 19:11; Jn. 6:14–15; 7:27, 41–42; 10:36; 12:34). Yet Jesus, under oath, affirmed their own words about Him being the Messiah and the “son of God” according to those words’ right and Biblical meaning. They proceeded to accuse Him of blasphemy (Mt. 26:63–65).

Wamphray argues: “10. That bond is sinful which may be interpreted contrary to our former lawful and solemnly sworn bonds and covenants.”⁴⁷⁶ If such a bond need not be contrary to the said covenants, it may be consistent therewith: something that someone has liberty for, or even an obligation unto.

Wamphray: “14. That bond is sinful whereby the ministers engaged... are by the imposers: 1. Restricted in the exercise of the key of doctrine. 2. Robbed of the key of discipline... 3. Are debarred from perpetuating the succession of a faithful ministry by ordaining others thereto...”⁴⁷⁷ The third indulgence did not explicitly restrict preaching, except “to preach rebellion, schism and heresy,” albeit this was clearly aimed at the field preachers. Yet Vilant testified in 1681, and the same undoubtedly was true in years before, that some of the field preachers really did preach sedition;⁴⁷⁸ and sedition, along

of Me, Christopher Love (London: 1651), pp. 3–4. Baxter: “We must distinguish... 2. Between the obvious usual sense of the words and an unusual forced sense.” *A Christian Directory* (London: White, 1673), pt. 3, ch. 5, title 2, p. 705.

⁴⁷⁵ Ames: “As if occasional accommodation were all one with imposition, or voluntary joining in action for the good that is in it, were always a certain argument of holding that opinion which others do affix unto it.” *A Fresh Suit Against Human Ceremonies in God’s Worship...* (Amsterdam: Thorp, 1633), ch. 1, section 17, p. 82.

⁴⁷⁶ Wamphray, *Banders Disbanded*, “From its sinfulness”, p. 26.

⁴⁷⁷ Wamphray, *Banders Disbanded*, “From its sinfulness”, p. 28.

⁴⁷⁸ Vilant: “but the seditious turbulent doctrine of some did breed much trouble to others who were innocent. It cannot be denied that there were some meetings where such doctrine was taught by the

with the civil aspects of schism and heresy are part of the magistrate's jurisdiction, according to his light and conscience under the Word (though he err therein).⁴⁷⁹

preachers and applauded and practiced by hearers, that it was no wonder that the magistrate called them seditious." *Review & Examination*, p. 602

⁴⁷⁹ Wodrow, *History*, 3.149. "Sedition," and that in preaching, was something that constantly hung over the heads of all the ministers (including the indulged), which the government at times convicted them of. The remarks of Vilant, though, are sound: "if there be no fault in the councils taking notice of seditious discourses elsewhere, it will be unreasonable to hinder them from taking notice of seditious speeches uttered in the pulpit; for seditious discourses in the pulpit are not the better, but the worse that they are spoken in the pulpit; and they are the more dangerous and may readily be the more infectious that they are spoken, as if they were the Word of God, and so may readily be received by the hearers who cannot discern the Word of God; and there is no sedition more dangerous than that which pretends to be warranted by the Word of God. No sober person will say that the pulpit privileges a minister to speak sedition, and that the magistrate may not take notice of seditious discourses if they be uttered in the pulpit..."

His [Wamphray's] first inference, that the council is made the immediate formal judge of ministers' doctrine will be denied... for it only follows that the magistrate is the judge of seditious speeches and discourses; and this is no absurdity even in this author's [Wamphray's] opinion; for he grants that the civil magistrate can only and properly judge of what is truly seditious. 'But,' says he, 'under the pretext of seditious doctrine, they may judge and condemn the most innocent and orthodox truths.'

I reply, so Church-judicatory under the pretext of error or scandal may condemn orthodox truths and innocent practices. But I hope he will not deny that because a Kirk-judicatory, corrupt in all its members or in the major part of its members, may condemn orthodox truths, that therefore Church-judicatories are not the competent judges of truth and error, or of what is scandalous and what not; and if the errors of Kirk-men do not destroy the power and authority which Christ has given to ecclesiastical courts to judge of doctrine and to censure heresy and scandals; so the errors of magistrates, who take innocent truths for seditious errors does not destroy and make void that authority which God has given to magistrates to judge and punish seditious discourses...

I would gladly know what the author would have a minister do when he is cited to appear before the magistrate for speaking seditious speeches?... If his speeches have not been seditious, but the words of truth, then he has an opportunity not only of vindicating himself of the crime of sedition, but also of vindicating the truth and of instructing and edifying the magistrate; and who knows but a plain, sober, solid vindication of the truth may be blessed of God to discover to the magistrate his error and the innocency of the minister accused; and that any injury done to the minister for preaching the truth of God, would be a fighting against the God of truth...

Jeremiah is brought before the princes and accused for the doctrine he had taught; he does not refuse to answer to the accusation, but shows that his doctrine was of God and takes that occasion to exhort all that were hearing him to amend their doings and assures them that if they put him to death, they would bring innocent blood upon themselves; and this doctrine had a good effect upon the princes, *Jer.* 26:10-24.

The apostle Paul refuses not to declare what he had taught to the Roman judges; he sought and took all opportunities of preaching the Gospel; he did not submit his doctrine to their decisive judgment; for though they had condemned the truth, he would have still justified it and would have pitied them as blind; but he was always before all persons ready to preach the Gospel, of which he was not ashamed.

The true strength of the cause of the ministers of Christ when they are brought before rulers for preaching of the truth does not consist in some formalities which men use in litigious pleas, but in the plain declaring of the truth of God, which is mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds, casting down imaginations and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ... but sedition, by the confession of this author, is none

Respecting preaching, Wodrow says those indulging “were persuaded every point of truth ought not to be brought to the pulpit at all times. They considered there are sayings even disciples cannot bear [Mk. 4:33; Jn. 16:12; 1 Cor. 3:1–2; Heb. 5:11–14; 2 Pet. 3:15–16].”⁴⁸⁰ They were not wrong.⁴⁸¹ As William Perkins (d. 1602) noted, a partial conformist in the broken and declining Anglican Church (under much greater restrictions and burdens than the Scots):

“This rule was practiced by Paul [Acts 19:17–41]... he was three years in Ephesus, an idolatrous place, where the great goddess Diana was worshipped; yet in all that time he contained himself and spake nothing in particular against Diana, but only in general against false gods, saying that ‘they be no gods that are made with hands,’ v. 26.

Nay, Alexander could not charge him with this, that he had in all that while blasphemed their goddess Diana [Acts 19:37]. Paul therefore was feign to yield to the sway of those times that so he might do some good in Ephesus by his ministry. Whereas, if he had spoken against Diana directly, it had not been possible for him to have done that good by preaching which otherwise he did.”⁴⁸²

Nonetheless, according to Bairdie and Vilant, the indulged ministers did not restrict their preaching:

“it is credibly informed that the indulged upon all competent occasions testify against the iniquities of the times in their sermons as well as others do (though not indiscreetly to irritate, rather than edify); and particularly, they have not been wanting to testify against all things contrary to Christ’s prerogative of being the alone King and Head of his Church, as their constant hearers can witness. Whence it is apparent they are not so sinfully silent (as some allege) though they make it not their ordinary theme as some others do.”⁴⁸³

of these causes which are merely ecclesiastical; for he grants that the magistrate can only properly judge of what is truly seditious.” *Review & Examination*, pp. 194–99.

On the magistrate’s authority to judge of the civil aspects of heresy and schism, see Fentiman, *Circa Sacra*, pp. 49–52, 78–79, 81. Though the magistrate does not consult with the Church first as he ought, yet he still has jurisdiction over the civil aspects of society.

Baxter: “Princes also may correct... destroyers of... peace: They ought to restrain such pastors as would raise seditions or rebellions... or that pretend religion for the open and obstinate revilings of their brethren, and are proved to be unquiet firebrands to kindle dissensions and destroy men’s love to one another...” *Church Concord* (London: 1691), pt. 2, Question 5, “What is the Magistrates Power and Duty about Religion, and the Churches and Ministers of Christ?” p. 74.

⁴⁸⁰ Wodrow, *History*, 2.210.

⁴⁸¹ See ‘Not All Truths must be Preached in All Circumstances’ at ‘Pastors’ (RBO).

⁴⁸² William Perkins, *Cases of Conscience* (Cambridge, 1606), bk. 3, ch. 2, pp. 482–83.

⁴⁸³ Bairdie, *Balm from Gilead*, p. 118. Vilant: “These ministers have labored, and have not fainted; they have not shunned to declare the whole Counsel of God, nor have they withholden what was convenient for the people; they have given the people faithful warning to beware of those evils of the time, which the

As to being robbed of the key of discipline, Wamphray, exaggerating, means partially so, so far as the presbyteries were restricted in certain ways by the bishops, and that externally, whereas much of the spiritual discipline of Christ could still be fulfilled through the pastors' ministries (as our authors below will profoundly show) and presbyteries. All Church order and discipline, be reminded, as to being performed in specific circumstances, is a matter of decency, order and edification, and is limited thereto (1 Cor. 14:26, 40).⁴⁸⁴

In a passage the puritans often commented on to our purpose, Dt. 12:8-11, God's people were to put off their enjoined, stated worship ordinances while they were in the wilderness (in that broken and declining Church-state) till they came "to the rest and to the inheritance," when God would give "you rest from all your enemies round about, so that ye dwell in safety. Then... shall ye bring all that I command you, your burnt offering, and your sacrifices..." One key factor, the passage says, for legitimately omitting whole swaths of public discipline and worship is "that ye dwell in safety." See 'That Persons or Whole Churches Omitting Parts of Worship due to Necessary Factors (including Providential & for Reformation) may be Acceptable to God'.⁴⁸⁵

Regarding being "debarred from perpetuating the succession of a faithful ministry by ordaining others thereto," ever since 1661, by civil fiat, ordination was given into the hands of the bishops only.⁴⁸⁶ While this was a grievous enormity, yet Wamphray exaggerates, as though presbyterian ministers so circumscribed, or any minister of a

people were in hazard; and though they think it not their duty to turn the preaching of the Gospel of peace into bitter wrathful invectives against any, especially absent persons (which is a smooth preaching to those who are present, who use not to be humbled, but rather puffed up by such invectives against others);

and though they dare not bring railing accusations against, nor revile nor curse those who are in lawful authority, nor despise dignities, nor say anything which tends to put an evil spirit betwixt magistrates and people, yet they have been far from flattering any rulers or people in their sins, but have endeavored to bring persons of all ranks to repentance as they have had access and occasion from the Word to discover the evil and danger of sins of all sorts; and they pray for repentance to persons of all ranks, as they think it not their duty to design to provoke any person to wrath, so they study not to please any in their sin, but think themselves obliged to endeavor to please all unto edification and to commend themselves, though not to the humors, yet to the consciences of all in the sight of God." *Review & Examination*, pp. 280-81.

⁴⁸⁴ See 'How All Church Governing May be Practically Done unto Edification' and 'On How Church Discipline is Limited to Edification in its Time & Place, etc.' at 'On the Ordinances, Order & Policy of the Church' (RBO).

⁴⁸⁵ At 'On Impurities in Worship' (RBO).

⁴⁸⁶ Vos, *Scottish Covenanters*, pp. 79-80.

different kind of Church government, could not be a faithful minister (contra Mt. 25:21–23; Mk. 9:38–40).

Heb. 3:2 says, in a comparison with Christ, “Moses was faithful in all his house.” Yet Moses and the Israelites in Ex. 8:25–26 (in that broken and declining Church-state) were not sacrificing to God in Egypt so as not to scandalize the Egyptians⁴⁸⁷ and for their physical safety, for “will they not stone us?” Thus Moses (the prophetic mouthpiece here before Pharaoh) reasoned regarding sacrificing animals before their enemies: “It is not meet so to do.” Yet God heard the Israelites’ prayers and accepted their moral obedience unto Him (Ex. 1:21; 2:24; 3:7; 4:31; 6:5; 9:20; 14:13, 31), which they did not transgress even when in danger of their lives (Ex. 1:17), in contrast to omitting public worship ordinances.

What is more, the apostle praised the Corinthians that they “keep the ordinances, as I delivered them to you” (1 Cor. 11:2), even though they had leaders in worship ministering in unknown languages (1 Cor. 14:13–17), they did not discipline an incestuous person (1 Cor. 5:1–2), or persons denying a fundamental of the faith (1 Cor. 15:12–19), they mixed the Lord’s Supper with a common meal such that many did not discern the Lord’s body in it (1 Cor. 11:20–21, 29, 33–34), many things were out of order, confusion reigned (1 Cor. 14:33, 40), shameful things were occurring (1 Cor. 11:5–6, 14), people were getting drunk (1 Cor. 11:21) and a visitor might think they were out of their minds (1 Cor. 14:23, this being an “interpretive scandal,” which the non-indulged so greatly pressed).⁴⁸⁸ While Corinth was not the measure of all things, yet so far as the apostle praised them in that they “keep the ordinances, as I delivered them to you,” it ought to make us think twice whether our priorities are exactly that measure.

In a guide for all ages, Christ praises as faithful the churches of Ephesus, Pergamos and Thyatira on account of their practical godliness (First Commandment, Rev. 2:3–4, 13, 19), though they had some gross enormities in Church government (Second Commandment), much worse than having bishops (Rev. 2:14–15, 20–23). To those in Thyatira who believed not the detested doctrines, nor taught them, yet had to tolerate the gross ills of others in practice which they could not reform by Church government, Christ tells them not to separate, but “I will put upon you none other burden,” that is, He will

⁴⁸⁷ Peter van Mastricht: “...they certainly desired sacrifices, but did not sacrifice, being deterred by fear of the Egyptians (Ex. 8:26)...” *Theoretical-Practical Theology*, ed. Joel Beeke, trans. Todd Rester (Reformation Heritage Books), bk. 8, ch. 2, §25, forthcoming.

⁴⁸⁸ See pp. 90–92 above with footnotes 260 & 263.

not require of them anything more in these pressing trials ([Rev. 2:20–24](#)), “but that which ye have already, hold fast till I come” ([Rev. 2:24–25](#)). How can this be? “For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink,” or other outward ordinances, “but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. For he that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God, and approved of men.” ([Rom. 14:17–18](#))

Nonetheless, Vilant says “the indulged ministers *cum periculo* [with experiment, trial or proof], as well as the non-indulged, ordain ministers; they have accepted of no terms to incapacitate them for ordination.”⁴⁸⁹ Further, our authors will show below that bishops can confer valid ordination and ordination can be morally received from them in necessity.⁴⁹⁰ Note, if conforming may be lawful in case of ministerial deprivation, it is lawful in order to enter the ministry.

In another place Wamphray argues: “the entry of the indulged... contributes to the strengthening, securing and encouraging of the usurpation...”⁴⁹¹ Besides that the bishops were against the indulgences (they coming truly from the king’s indulgence),⁴⁹² Bairdie, previously responding to this objection, notes that the non-indulged voluntarily leaving their pulpits in 1662 upon the civil act much more strengthened, secured and encouraged the usurpation than the acceptance of any of the indulgences.⁴⁹³

Lastly it might be objected by some that much of the reasoning in response to the arguments against the indulgence is abstract. Bairdie rightly answered:

⁴⁸⁹ Vilant, *Review & Examination*, p. 225. That this occurred, even by whole presbyteries, is evidenced in Wodrow, *History*, 2.198, 274–76, 296, 346, 356, 400, 482 & 498.

⁴⁹⁰ See ‘Though a Single Bishop has No Rightful Power of Himself to Ordain, yet the Church’s Ordination may be Received through a Bishop’ at ‘On Prelacy & Episcopacy’ (RBO) and ‘On Performing Necessary Duties though Others Sin in Them’ at ‘On Impurities in Worship’ (RBO).

⁴⁹¹ Wamphray, *History*, p. 131.

⁴⁹² Bairdie: “why then have the prelates and their friends such an antipathy against it? Do not all know it was granted over their bellies and sore against their mind? It is their eyesore as it is yours; and to this day never did they like it, except insofar as ye made it an apple of contention among yourselves and thereby diverted your edge of them. Did not many of them say it was the highway to break, undermine and wear out their government? Thinking that as Dagon could not stand before the ark, neither prelacy beside any little of presbytery without losing ground daily? Did they not exclaim against it as a reviving, perpetuating and riveting the presbyterian interest, which they thought had been quite broken and buried?” *Balm from Gilead*, pp. 67, 132–33; Cameron, *Dictionary*, p. 769.

⁴⁹³ Bairdie: “Had this been said of the outing of you [in 1662], it might have more color; the exercise of and submitting unto the magistrate’s privative power, *circa sacra* [as the non-indulged did], tending more natively hereunto. But how this can be justly alleged of the exercise and acceptance of the benefit of his auxiliary power and act of his nurse-fathership in indulging part of that liberty formerly taken from you, we see not.” *Balm from Gilead*, p. 95. On the voluntariness of walking out in 1662, see [footnote 466](#) above.

“when folk begin to cast at just distinguishing and separating the precious from the vile as mere notional and metaphysical abstractions unfit for Christians or men (as some of you are pleased to talk), we fear they be found builders of Babel, not of Salem [Peace], but love [those] who will to be masters of confusion...”⁴⁹⁴

Conclusion to the Indulgences

The trials and oppression the Scottish Church came under in that era were severe. For however legitimate self-defense in some circumstances may be against one’s own government (even with lesser magistrates), Jesus advised his disciples, in a matter of greater import to his Kingdom (even of protecting the Messiah from being lynched) to the lesser evil: “Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword.” (Mt. 26:52–54) That was by and large that Scottish era’s alternative, and many presbyterians who could not see things otherwise suffered the fore-spoken consequents. Some sadly believe God loves the burnt offerings of Church ordinances more than mercy, but God does not (Hos. 6:6; Mt. 9:13; Mt. 12:7).⁴⁹⁵

Wodrow (1679–1734) grew up during the later indulgences and wrote the most in-depth history of the Church of Scotland’s sufferings in that era. While acknowledging the indulgence became a bone of contention “among good people,”⁴⁹⁶ yet, with respect to the indulgence:

“it is beyond denial, the Lord in his holy providence had much good to bring out of it to the famishing souls of thousands... It must be owned the Lord eminently countenanced the labors and ministry of the indulged; and they could not but acknowledge they had as great and sensible assistance in the work of the gospel as ever they had formerly known, and their success among their hearers was not small.”⁴⁹⁷

⁴⁹⁴ Bairdie, *Balm from Gilead*, p. 65.

⁴⁹⁵ One might object that Daniel’s three friends rightly suffered for keeping God’s commandments. Yet that would have involved a transgression of what God had morally forbidden (idolatry), whereas the absence of external Church government is not forbidden, it being a positive command. Nor is Church government inherently moral, but secondary and positive in nature. See ‘*Church Government is Secondary*’ above.

⁴⁹⁶ Wodrow, *History*, 2.129.

⁴⁹⁷ Wodrow, *History*, 2.134–35. Vilant: “...the Gospel of Jesus Christ preached by them [the indulged], who, I am sure, have been armed by God in the ministry with a blessing upon the souls of many, though it

Needless to say, if conforming at 1662 or later indulging was not inherently wrong, neither was hearing the preaching of conformed or indulged ministers, or fellowshiping with those who did. Even if conforming and indulging was wrong, as the majority of the non-indulged field preachers held, it still was not wrong, but necessary in some circumstances to hear the conformed or indulged ministers⁴⁹⁸ and to maintain fellowship with those that heard them,⁴⁹⁹ contra the minority (who would come to be known as the Cameronians) that split away from the majority field ministers in 1679.⁵⁰⁰ It is not surprising that in Cameronianism separatism went to seed.⁵⁰¹

A note of advice for those seeking to make their way through difficult issues: Do not guide your conduct by false principles. If you do unknowingly found your decisions on mistaken principles, because they are false, it will be impossible for you to live consistently by them. There is something profound in this. The Scottish Aberdeen professors at one point informed those whom they disagreed with:

“That your answers, reverend and dear brethren, have not in any degree satisfied us, we impute it not to your weakness, whom we know to be able men and much exercised in

is like[ly] these that now seek to decry the indulged ministers will not believe that ever their ministry was blessed and countenanced of God; and how can they, seeing they look not upon them as the ambassadors of Christ? But blessed be God, who has looked upon them as his ambassadors and has not left their ministry without the seal of a sensible blessing upon many.” [Review & Examination](#), p. 6.

⁴⁹⁸ The English presbyterian Edward Gee: “We must needs grant there are things which may be done upon the usurpers' command or injunction (though not because or by virtue of it) for the command of him that unwarrantably assumes power cannot, by itself, make that unlawful which were lawful if that were not. For instance, the performance of acts of common equity, charity, order, public utility and self-preservation is requisite: suppose it be in concurrence with a usurpers' command, and in thus doing we do materially, but not formally obey him; the ground of acting in such things being not at all any relation or principle of subjection to him, but conscience of obedience to the will of God and due respect to others and our own safety and good.” *An Exercitation concerning Usurped Powers...* (London, 1650), [ch. 3](#), p. 22.

⁴⁹⁹ van Mastricht: “With these that err beyond the foundation, in curious questions (1 Cor. 3:13-14), the sort that are rebuked everywhere in the epistles to Timothy and Titus, or concerning rites that are not entirely idolatrous, or discipline that is more lax, but not entirely taken away, they [the Reformed] think that fellowship must not be broken, because in such things does not consist the reckoning of unity, or the kingdom of God (Rom. 14:17; Eph. 4:3-5, 7; Col. 2:16ff.).” *Theoretical Practical Theology*, vol. 5, bk. 7, ch. 1, §35, forthcoming.

⁵⁰⁰ See the arguments of the majority in M'Crie, *Story of the Scottish Church*, p. 335 and Wodrow, *History*, 3.91 (rt col) & 93 (rt col), but especially Baxter, [On Worship & Catholicity](#), as well as ‘[Against Double Separation in Many Church Duties](#)’ and ‘[For Occasional Hearing](#)’, both at ‘[On Schism & Separatism](#)’ (RBO).

⁵⁰¹ ‘[The Separatism of the Cameronians](#)’ at ‘[On Schism & Separatism](#)’ (RBO).

the matters debated betwixt us: but we impute it to the weakness of your cause and to that inability which is in all men, as well as in you, to bear out against the truth.”⁵⁰²

4. White Towers & Unifying Christ’s Church

The principles that have been learned and our rebalancing of priorities ought to not only show us that the unifying of Christ’s Church is possible, but it is obligatory and this ought to cause us to endeavor after it. To help understand how we got to where we are, remaining separatism in presbyterianism around 1690 will be briefly observed. The civil allowance of the more sound protestant denominations in England at that time could only tend toward facilitating and cementing those denominations into remaining separate, entering us into modern denominationalism. To seek to reverse that trend, [Phil. 3:15-16](#), “whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing,” will be expounded and cleared from the separatistic construction often put on it.

Lastly, principles of Scripture, Westminster, the Scots and the London presbyterians for unifying the Church will be laid out and recommended, versus erecting denominational white towers. The fundamentals (at least) of Christianity will be seen to be sufficient and obligatory Scriptural doctrinal grounds for organic Church union (with all due care and prudence), as the post-apostolic early Church, many of the reformed (including the leading Scottish covenanter James Durham) and the London presbyterians taught, it being no sin, but a divine obligation for the stronger to help and be united to the weaker (though they must relinquish rights and privileges for the here now to do so). Consequently, secondary teachings and practices which do not tend to overturn the fundamentals or the power of godliness will be seen to be no grounds for division, or schism. Objections will be resolved and the reform of Christ’s one Church will be encouraged and set on its way.

⁵⁰² *Duplyes of the Ministers & Professors of Aberdeen to the Second Answers of some Reverend Brethren concerning the Late [National] Covenant [of 1638], ‘To our Brethren’, p. 73, appended to General Demands concerning the Late Covenant...* (Edinburgh: Robert Young, 1638; repr. Aberdeen: John Forbes, 1663).

Remaining Separatism in Presbyterianism

Shortly after the Great Ejection (1662), non-conformist ministers in England who continued to hold public worship had a decision to make: Whether they ought to guide their people in allowing attendance upon the Anglican Liturgy at times, or not. The issue is largely founded on whether one might submit in some conditional fashion and manner to impurities deviating from what one believes to be the Scriptural standard. The majority of the non-conformists, especially the ministers, initially were for such a conditioned-submission under the impure Anglican worship.⁵⁰³ Ministers outside the establishment, though, no longer had to perform things they disagreed with in Church government or public worship, a circumstance that would naturally grow on anyone. Some non-conformist ministers advocated against any compliance with any impurity in God's worship.⁵⁰⁴

By 1680 the noted presbyterian minister John Collinges⁵⁰⁵ wrote a tract on behalf of *English Presbytery: or an Account of the Main Opinions of those Ministers and People in England who go under the name of Presbyterians*. He could claim, at least to his own mind,⁵⁰⁶

⁵⁰³ "In line with presbyterian arguments formed during the 1640's and 1650's and, indeed, the longer Reformed tradition, the vast majority of ejected [English] ministers [in 1662] rejected outright separatism." Vernon in eds. Griesel & Counsell, *Reformed Identity*, ch. 5, "[Crofton & the Dilemmas of Partial Conformity, 1662-65](#)" Baxter: "21. I have formerly told the world that many of the most noted nonconformists in London met and concluded for communicating in the parish-churches about 1664... 23. Some in the city, and more in the countries, all this while went constantly to the parish-churches before this liberty, and as oft as they could after, lest they should by their practice draw the people to think that they took it for unlawful." *On Worship & Catholicity*, p. 22. Even the later [William Symington](#) (†1862), a paradigmatic writer for the Reformed Presbyterians, taught indefinite compliance to an immoral and invalid system of civil government: Symington, *Messiah the Prince, or the Mediatorial Dominion of Jesus Christ* (Philadelphia: The Christian Statesman Publishing Co., 1884), pp. 255-56.

⁵⁰⁴ This was the trajectory of John Owen; see "Editor's Introduction" in Baxter, *On Worship & Catholicity*, pp. 3-11.

⁵⁰⁵ The tract is anonymous but Edmund Calamy (who had means to know) attributed it to Collinges (Calamy, *An Account of the Ministers, Lecturers, Masters and Fellows of Colleges and Schoolmasters who were Ejected or Silenced After the Restoration in 1660...* 2nd ed., London: Lawrence, 1713, 2.474) with modern libraries following.

⁵⁰⁶ Strangely enough in light of what Collinges says, he applied for a license to preach in 1672 and "was strongly for the union of Presbyterians and Congregationals..." *Freedom after Ejection: a Review (1690-1692) of Presbyterian & Congregational Nonconformity in England & Wales* (Manchester University Press, 1917), pp. [240](#) & [355](#).

however untrue it be,⁵⁰⁷ that those “which are called presbyterians,” without qualification, hold that the Scriptures direct:

“what to do in all matters relating to the worship of God and the government of the Church so as in these things they may not either believe or do what is not there expressly or by immediate consequence revealed...”⁵⁰⁸

The matter is not simply what the Scriptural standard is, or what is to be believed and approved, but what may be *done* is itself exclusively limited. Collinges announces again for presbyterians what should not be *done*:

“in sacred things they believe the Scriptures to be a particular rule, both as to acts and modes,⁵⁰⁹ so as it is the will of God that in them nothing should be done but what is there directed...”⁵¹⁰

Several more of Collinges’s passages confirm this understanding.⁵¹¹ The separatist implications of this subtle language (which in its context could hardly have been mistaken) are far reaching.

⁵⁰⁷ Numbers between the partial conformists and strict non-conformists in the late Restoration period are hard to determine; see C.G. Bolam and Jeremy Goring, ch. 3, “Presbyterians in Separation: the Cataclysm” in eds. Bolam, Goring, Short & Thomas, *English Presbyterians*, p. 91, giving evidence from 1676. One historian writes regarding “presbyterians”: “Partial conformity – attendance at both a parish church and a nonconformist meeting – was therefore widespread,” citing evidence in the 1680’s; George Southcombe, ch. 3, “Presbyterians in the Restoration” in ed. John Coffey, *The Oxford History of Protestant Dissenting Traditions, Volume 1, The Post-Reformation Era, c. 1559–c. 1689* (Oxford University Press, 2020). Attendance on the parish churches often involved, though not always, persons taking the Lord’s Supper, and that kneeling. Note also that the popular partial-conformist, Baxter, who was the chief leader of the English presbyterians during the Restoration era wrote at least seven books for partial conformity during the 1680’s.

⁵⁰⁸ Anonymous, *English Presbytery: or an Account of the Main Opinions of those Ministers and People in England who go under the name of Presbyterians...* (London: 1680), p. 1.

⁵⁰⁹ To see that this is not so with regard to modes, see Baxter and Fentiman in Baxter, *On Worship & Catholicity*, pp. 36–38 & 41–43.

⁵¹⁰ Anon., *English Presbytery*, pp. 1–2.

⁵¹¹ “...they can allow nothing as an act, or mean, or mode of true worship, under the Gospel, but what Christ has prescribed, or exemplified, by Himself, or his apostles, or is justified by some precepts or examples in the New Testament...” “The Word of God directing the form and manner of receiving and administering both sacraments, they believe they ought to be administered and received according to those forms, and no other...” “They believe that ministers of the Gospel are bound to pray and to preach in the exercise of those abilities, which God has given them for the work of the ministry; and to administer the sacraments, and acts of jurisdiction, according to the rule God has set them in his Word, and no otherwise...”

The open civil toleration of the more sober protestant denominations in England after 1690 would only facilitate presbyterians removing from the Church of England and forgetting the catholic principles by which they may and ought to unite with other Christians in government and public worship,⁵¹² not only where a least-common-denominator accommodation can be made (such as with congregationalists),⁵¹³ but even under hardship in order to maintain the unity of Christ's Church in the most important and weighty fundamental things of the Gospel.

On the Scottish side, Gilbert Rule was a principal divine-right presbyterian minister, writer and apologist at the time of the Revolution Church Settlement in 1690, being a leader therein. It is likely he swore to the [SL&C](#).⁵¹⁴ Rule was ejected in 1662, he took the third indulgence of 1679, suffered for non-conformity after that,⁵¹⁵ and "counselled [for] moderation in dealing with Episcopalian incumbents" in 1690.⁵¹⁶ He professed a continuing obligation to the national covenants after 1690.⁵¹⁷ Rule's influence was greatly amplified in his appointment in the same year to being the principal of Edinburgh University till his death in 1701. He wrote that some old puritans "thought the ceremonies were inconvenient, yet might be used; we think them unlawful, and not to be used..."⁵¹⁸ Seeing these trends remaining in both English and Scottish presbyterianism

⁵¹² John Coffey: "For [Martin] Sutherland, [John] Howe was more than a spokesman for 'moderate Presbyterianism'. He forged a distinctive ecclesiology quite different to that of Richard Baxter. Whereas Baxter had laid great stress on the 'visible church' and on the role of the Christian magistrate, Howe shifted the emphasis to the invisible church and the individual conscience. It was his ecclesiology (not Baxter's) that was to enjoy ascendancy within eighteenth-century Dissent, as it embraced toleration and abandoned the goal of institutional unity." "[Rigid Calvinisme in a Softer Dresse: The Moderate Presbyterianism of John Howe, 1630–1750, Written by David Field, Reviewed by John Coffey](#)" in *Themelios*, vol. 32, issue 2.

⁵¹³ "In 1690 the Presbyterians and Congregationalists joined forces to help one another financially with a common fund and then corporately in 1691 by uniting the ministers together on the basis of a doctrinal document. This latter union was well received by many. Matthew Mead took the occasion to preach a sermon on [Ezekiel 37:19](#) entitled, 'Two Sticks Made One: Or the Excellency of Unity'. Unfortunately, the celebration didn't last long because a theological controversy that had already been brewing... all forms of cooperation between the two sides were severed by 1695." D. Patrick Ramsey, "[Lessons from an Old Theological Controversy](#)" (2024) at Patrick's Pensees.

⁵¹⁴ As he was a regent of Glasgow University and sub-principal at King's College Aberdeen in the late-1640's and early 1650's, and as, per James Walker, he "hated ceremonies and holidays." *Dictionary*, p. 733.

⁵¹⁵ James Wood Brown, *The Covenanters of the Merse: their History & Sufferings as Found in the Records of that Time* (Edinburgh: Anderson, 1893), pp. 166–67.

⁵¹⁶ *Dictionary*, 733.

⁵¹⁷ Rule, *A Rational Defence of Non-Conformity...* (London: Salusbury, 1689), pt. 1, §1, p. 40; idem, *A Vindication of the Church of Scotland...* (Edinburgh: Parkhurst, 1691), pp. 13–14.

⁵¹⁸ Rule, *Rational Defence of Non-Conformity*, pt. 3, §9, p. 276.

at the inception of denominationalism (particularly in England),⁵¹⁹ we leave off the historical narrative and turn to making reformation according to the Word.

“Whereto we have already attained,
let us walk by the same rule,”
Phil. 3:15–16

Phil. 3:15–16 is often used to justify a separatistic mindset. It reads:

“Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you. Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing.”

The idea, according to some, is that we are called to be perfect, even in secondary and tertiary issues (or “distinctives”). We ought to walk by this rule we have already attained; it would be wrong ever not to do so. Others may come up to us, if God so reveal more of the truth to them (as we all ought to mind the same thing), but we cannot lessen or omit any of our practice (even in the secondary things of Church government and public worship ordinances) so as to walk together in the same body and bonds with them. The separatism in this line of reasoning will go as far as people will take it.

The main problem with using Phil. 3:15–16 this way is that it is contrary to its context. The whole chapter revolves around Christ, the foundation, the fundamentals of the Faith and practical Christianity: taking refuge in Christ, not our flesh or the Law, prizing the knowledge of Christ, striving after Him and his righteousness by faith, fellowshiping in his sufferings, being conformed to his death, being heavenly-minded and apprehended of Him, looking for his Second Coming and persevering unto the Resurrection and Glory. Paul’s opponents are those who deny Christ, the fundamentals and make a god of themselves, whose end is destruction.

⁵¹⁹ Denominationalism in Scotland was slower to come about; see Fentiman, *Circa Sacra*, p. 84 with fn. 244. Denominationalism was present from America’s founding; see ‘*The Establishment Principle in the American Westminster Standards & the Early American Colonies & States*’ (RBO).

When Paul speaks of “as many as be perfect” (v. 16), he is speaking of being whole, complete and entire in these fundamental things. The “rule” we are to walk by is that which we have “already attained,” namely these fundamentals, minding the same thing (v. 16). “If in any thing” else “ye be otherwise minded,” that is, in things other than Christian fundamentals, such as secondary and tertiary points (like Church government and public worship), “God shall reveal even this to you” (v. 15); that is, one may and ought to walk together though Christians be “otherwise minded” about lesser matters, till God may bring us into one mind about them. This general interpretation of Phil. 3:15–16 was taught by our authors below and is that of, or consists with, the mid-1600’s London Presbyterians, the *Dutch Annotations*, John Diodati, Edward Reynolds, Matthew Poole, Francis Turretin and Matthew Henry,⁵²⁰ only to name some.

Paul’s walking by this same rule he has attained, does not entail us walking according to every point we have come to be convicted is true, never joining with those who disagree or walk otherwise (leaving them to come up to our standard, if ever they might), but it assumes union and walking with them in Christ (as in Rom. 14). But how can we do this in things like Church government and public worship ordinances without sacrificing our principles? Our authors will show you how.

White Towers vs. Scripture

Seeking to erect a denominational white tower is short-sighted. Other Christian denominations and associations erect their own white towers, and never shall they meet. Even if one’s own stands the tallest and most pure, how is it that it stands in necessary separation from so much of Christ’s Church? If Christ’s body is ever to be one (Eph. 4:4) on this paradigm or methodology, on the best case scenario the unifying of Christ’s Church would have to come after Churches have remained separate for a long time rather

⁵²⁰ London Provincial Assembly, *Vindication of Presbyterial Government*, p. 120; *The Dutch Annotations upon the Whole Bible...* (London: Hills, 1657), on Phil. 3:15–16; John Diodati, *Pious Annotations upon the Holy Bible...* (London: T.B., 1643), on Phil. 3, vv. 15–16; Edward Reynolds, *The Whole Works...* (London: Holdsworth, 1826), sermon 14, “Brotherly Reconciliation”, pp. 155–57; Matthew Poole, *English Annotations on the Holy Bible*, on Phil. 3, vv. 15–16; Francis Turretin, *Institutes*, 1.49; Matthew Henry, *Complete Commentary on the Bible*, on Phil. 3, vv. 15–16.

than oneness and union being characteristic of Christ's Church through the time it is being built up in the faith, as Scripture enjoins: [1 Cor. 1:10](#); [Eph. 4:11-13](#); so the covenanter James Durham.⁵²¹

That Christ has one Church in the land is not so much a desideratum or priority as it is an always enduring fact. To operate off a paradigm that does not take this into account, or works against it, is to go against your Master and the grain of spiritual reality. If Christ owned a broad tent, even the visible Church of Israel in his own day ([Mt. 15:24](#); [23:37](#); [Lk. 1:69](#), who had the oracles of God, and "to whom pertaineth the adoption, the glory... and the service of God, and the promises... as concerning the flesh Christ came," [Rom. 9:4](#); [3:2](#); [Acts 7:38](#); [Heb. 5:12](#)) and worked within it, ought not we? When He worked for his Church's reform and sent ministers to it, as He still sends ministers, was it not to all of it? ([Mt. 10:5-6](#); [15:24](#); [Eph. 4:11-13](#)) Did not Christ and his disciples not only avoid evil in the Church without separating therefrom ([Mt. 16:11](#)),⁵²² but did this even in respect of that supreme civil magistrate over God's people, Herod Antipas, who complied with and enforced Erastianism?⁵²³ Jesus "charged" his disciples not to separate, but, "Take heed, beware... of the leaven of Herod.'" ([Mk. 8:15](#))?

Scripture does speak of those who sought to be the most pure Christians in separation from the rest who didn't measure up, in [1 Cor. 1:12](#): they said, "I [am] of Christ." Paul, ignoring their pietistic veneer and Biblical (yet arrogant and deceptive) language, exposes that sectarianism for what it is with the simple question: "Is Christ divided?" ([1 Cor. 1:13](#)) What they took to be their unalterable constitutional identity and glory, so far from being a righteous and necessary ground of separation, was their shame and manifestly needless. In the midst of that denominationalism, "I am of Paul; and I of Apollo; and I of Cephas," Paul wrote to Christians, and to us:

⁵²¹ Durham: "by way of precept there is an absolute necessity of uniting laid upon the Church, so that it falls not under debate whether a Church should continue divided or united *in these* [in thesis]... seeing that union is both commanded as a duty and commanded as eminently tending to the edification of the Church, and therefore is so frequently joined with edification? Nor is it to be asked by a Church what is to be done for the Church's good in a divided way, thereby supposing a dispensation, as it were, to be given to division and a forbearing of the use of means for the attaining thereof; or rather supposing a stating or fixing of division, and yet notwithstanding thereof, thinking to carry on edification?" *Dying Man's Testament*, pt. 4, ch. 7, pp. 315-16.

⁵²² See further 'James Owen – Occasional Communion' under 'Principles of Union & Separation about Church Assemblies with Impurities of Worship in Them' at 'On Impurities in Worship' (RBO).

⁵²³ Josephus, *Antiquities*, bk. 18, ch. 2, §§1-2; ch. 4, §3; ch. 5, §3.

“I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ... that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.” (1 Cor. 1:10)

Westminster & the Scots’ catholic Principles

Westminster and her Scottish commissioners were eminently catholic and an example and guide to us in using universal, Christian principles in seeking to reform and establish an indigenous Christian Church. In 2 Chron. 15:8–15 the sincere God-fearers in Israel were assembled, all who would “seek the Lord God of their fathers with all their heart and with all their soul.” (2 Chron. 15:12) These formed the basis for king Asa’s reformation of the national Church. Rutherford, one of the Scottish commissioners, in elucidating these principles used this example and that of king Josiah (2 Kn. 23:4), who:

“laid charge on Hilkiah the high priest and the priests of the second order, whom he knew to be better affected to the work [2 Kings 22:10–15], to bring out the vessels made for Baal [in the Temple]; which proves that the king should put the sincerest to do that which in common belongs to the whole...”⁵²⁴

So far from the English Parliament, Westminster and the Scottish commissioners seeking to erect a white tower, irrespective of the rest of Christ’s Church in the land, as will be seen, they used a lowest common denominator approach that encompassed the whole, sincere, English body of Christ, working up from there according to what was edifying and as consciences could agree and bear. They did not simply use the standards

⁵²⁴ Rutherford in the original is a bit mixed up in the details. He cites 2 Chron. 23, where the righteous priest Jehoiada is leading the reformation, though this does have relevance to the purpose. Rutherford also mistakenly cites Jehoshaphat, though 2 Chron. 19 about Jehoshaphat is also relevant to the purpose: “Shouldst thou help the ungodly, and love them that hate the Lord?” (v. 2) In the rest of the chapter Jehoshaphat gives exhortations for those in public places to exercise their offices in a godly and righteous manner, which assumes it is best to have godly and righteous persons put into those places. Rutherford, *Due Right*, pt. 2, Appendix, Conclusion 5, pp. 412–13. Conclusions 6–7, pp. 413–19 deal with what is to be done when the corrupt part of the Church prevails in a nation.

of a more reformed, foreign Church and leave off the rest of Christ's people (who were not so strong to fend for themselves and come up to that height).

When the English parliament called the Assembly (including to determine Church government for the nation), they did not prelimit the outcome, but invited a sampling of sincere and notable (and not so notable) Christian ministers and laymen in England to sit therein, including, besides presbyterians: Episcopalians, Independents, Erastians and an Arminian divine.⁵²⁵ The Assembly sought to find and produce unanimous agreement wherever possible.⁵²⁶ Such a methodology tends to ensure what is produced will be a confession of the Christian faith of Christ's body in the land, reasonably representative of and acceptable to all. Illustrating this indigenous approach, one historian writes:

"The Scots fully encouraged the English to set up a Classical Presbytery based on English tradition and encouraged compromise [or rather a principled accommodation to the Independents]. In response to [the Independent] Philip Nye's sharp accusation that the Scots had 'given' the Assembly a whole system of church government, the Scottish members responded that 'we were well content the Assembly should take their own order, and not tie themselves to ours.'" ⁵²⁷

The result of this methodology is having one Church of Christ in the land. Where agreement cannot be reached in lesser matters, Christians are able to defer to each other until further reform to Christ's body can be made according to the Word (in accord with

⁵²⁵ Though many of the Episcopalians and Erastians, and others, declined due to being in support of the king against the Parliament during the civil wars. Episcopalians: Brownrigg, Earle, Featley, Hacket, Morley, Nicholson, Reynolds, Ussher, Westfield. Independents: A. Burgess, Burroughs, Bridge, Carter, Caryle, Goodwin, Greene, Greenhill, Nye, Philips, Simpson, Sterry, Ward. Erastians: Coleman, Cook, Downing, Glynne, Hesilrige, Maynard, St. John, Seldon, Whitelock. Arminian: Hammond.

⁵²⁶ Mitchell: "So far as appears from the minutes, the various articles of the Confession were passed by the Assembly all but unanimously. On some occasions, when dissent was indicated even by one or two of the members, the wording of the article they objected to was so modified as to satisfy them." *Westminster Assembly*, p. 363.

⁵²⁷ Before this quote comes this: "Much has been made by historians of the Scots 'forcing' their austere brand of religion upon their English brethren. However, it is clear that Scottish commissioners were aware their role was limited to advising only and that the construction of the Church rested with English members of the Assembly. Indeed, the Westminster Assembly did invite the Scottish commissioners to become full members of the Assembly, an invitation which the Scots declined, thereby recognising and respecting England's right to define its own church government..." Kirsteen M. MacKenzie, *The Solemn League & Covenant of the Three Kingdoms & the Cromwellian Union, 1643–1663* (Routledge, 2018), ch. 1, pp. 37–38.

nature's light, Christian prudence and the Word's general rules), while preserving her unity and avoiding schism:⁵²⁸ "If in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you. Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing." (Phil. 3:15–16)

The question arises how far should public opinions and practices, whether in such a national Church⁵²⁹ or outside it, be permitted? Early during Westminster's sitting, while Church government was being worked on for the nation, twenty-one of her divines published a short document to dissuade persons from gathering independent churches during that time. Their answer was paradigmatic:

"...the counsels of the Assembly of Divines and the care of the Parliament will... concur to preserve whatever shall appear to be the rights of particular congregations, according to the Word, and to bear with such whose consciences cannot in all things conform to the public rule, so far as the Word of God would have them borne withal."⁵³⁰

Gillespie at the Assembly made a list⁵³¹ of various worship practices done in the British isles (including some done by the Scots) that ought to be foregone in order to attain practical uniformity according to Westminster's *Directory for the Public Worship of God*.

⁵²⁸ George Calixt, a Lutheran theologian, on differing views of the Lord's Supper: "We prefer, as we said, that both parties sincerely and openly express their minds; and even if they disagree, they should put aside hatred and hostility and the desire for reviling and condemning, and foster and exercise mutual Christian charity, as befits Christians, until the matter is thoroughly and calmly discussed and debated among the learned, and God grants fuller and more perfect agreement. For if we treat and consider each other as Christians despite our controversies and errors, which each side imputes to the other, and believe that through human weakness the mind may err in difficulties, and thus lay aside hatred, which often disturbs minds and hinders the recognition of truth, and calmly confer among ourselves and seek the truth, there is hope, not small, that with the help of divine grace, which loves to assist the meek, it will finally be found, and that disagreements can be removed, settled, or at least diminished. But if we continue in mutual hatred, detestation, and execration, the eyes of the mind will be clouded, and we will be unable to see either truth or concord." *Judgment on Theological Controversies agitated between the Lutherans & Reformed, and on the mutual brotherhood and tolerance of parties because of consensus in the fundamentals*, tr. by AI by WesternCatholike (1650; Leiden, 1652), §LXXXIV, p. 35; idem, *Judicium de controversiis theologicis* (Leiden: Severinus Matthew, 1651), pp. 142–43.

Bairdie: "as heretics destroy the *fundamentalia doctrinae* [the fundamentals of doctrine], so do schismatics and dividers, *fundamentalia ecclesiae* [fundamentals of the Church], by dissolving the compages of Christ's mystical body into so many fractions; and that a mutiny in an army is no less destructive than treachery; and cutting and wounding of a man's body may be no less fatal to his life than: stripping him of his clothes and ornaments, yea or some grains of poison." *Balm from Gilead*, p. 133.

⁵²⁹ See 'On National Churches' at 'The Church' (RBO).

⁵³⁰ *Certain Considerations to Dissuade Men from Further Gathering of Churches in this Present Juncture of Time. Subscribed by [21] Diverse Divines of the [Westminster] Assembly* (London, 1643), p. 3.

⁵³¹ Gillespie, *Notes of Debates*, p. 108.

The practices in question, however lawful according to some, “have been, or apparently will be, occasions of divisions and offences” and “it is far from our intention that those or the like unnecessary burdens should be laid upon any, or any compelled thereto.” Hence churches would “do well to abstain [from them] for the law of love, and for the bond of peace.”

Westminster Consistent with Herself

Westminster’s methodology in this was not in any way at variance with her standards. While WLC #109 says the Second Commandment forbids “tolerating a false religion,” that is very different from tolerating variations of the Christian religion.⁵³² Likewise, while WCF 23.3 says it is a duty of the magistrate “that the truth of God be kept pure and entire; that all blasphemies and heresies be suppressed; all corruptions and abuses in worship and discipline prevented or reformed,” yet these are also all duties of ministers as well, as circumscribed in their places and callings. If ministers and the Church may give place to certain things for the Church’s unity (especially in the time of her immaturity), so may the magistrate.

Nor are Christians holding to or walking in variant, secondary doctrines or practices of government or public worship (in their mind according to an aiming at the Word) necessarily the equivalent of heresies or corruptions and abuses, especially as even things of the Word being implemented are “to be ordered by the light of nature and Christian prudence, according to the general rules of the Word” (WCF 1.6) and as “every particular duty is not to be done at all times.” (WLC 99.5) It is true the Church and a Christian civil government can recognize and enforce secondary teachings and practices of the Word for a Christian people (per Jesus, Paul, all the Protestant confessions and nations at the Reformation, etc.),⁵³³ yet it is also true certain secondary doctrines may not be enforced for the sake of the people and more fundamental principles of the Word. It is right to

⁵³² See p. 76 above with the footnotes.

⁵³³ Jesus: Mt. 5:32; 5:34-37; 7:1-5; 22:19-21, 30; 23:23; Mk. 2:27; 7:18-19, etc. Paul: 1 Cor. 7:12-13; 8:8-9; 9:13-14; 1 Tim. 2:11-12; Tit. 1:5.

give up something lesser in necessity in order to preserve or attain something greater;⁵³⁴ and it ought to be a principal and constant work of Christians to progress in unity in secondary and tertiary matters.⁵³⁵ WCF 23.3 does enjoin that the magistrate is “to take order, that unity and peace be preserved in the Church...”

Church Unity in the Fundamentals is Obliging

It has become customary in some portions of Christ’s Vineyard to speak of Christians sharing secondary (or even tertiary) beliefs and practices as being “like-minded,” and those persons only so. This is to fall far short of Scripture which uses “like-minded” (Phil. 2:2) of Christians who hold and pursue Christ, the one foundation (Lk. 6:48–49; 1 Cor. 3:11), and are sound in the fundamentals of the Faith and living,⁵³⁶ which things not only Phil. 2:2’s immediate context is about, but also the whole book of Philippians.⁵³⁷ This consists with the other use of the term in 1 Pet. 4:1–2, “Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind... that he no longer should live... to the lusts of men, but to the will of God.”

⁵³⁴ Vilant: “For a merchant to cast his wares in the sea in a calm were wicked folly contrary to the 8th Command, a stealing from his family and himself; and yet in a storm, Paul and the passengers and mariners thought it their duty to cast out both goods and tackling of the ship [Acts 27:18–19, 38].” *Review & Examination*, pp. 610–11.

⁵³⁵ For helps see ‘Towards Union in Secondary & Tertiary Matters’ at ‘Of Fundamental, Secondary & Tertiary Matters of Christianity...’ (RBO).

Bairdie: “Were it not more your wisdom and happiness to be hearkening to the apostles rule, Phil. 3:15–16, to be composing rather than heightening differences; and wherein ye agree, uniting and forbearing one another in points of difference, till the Lord decide the controversy? otherwise the enemy may perhaps decide it with the broad sword... How weak are ye, and a ready prey to every beast of the field that pleases to devour while thus disjointed and separate!” *Balm from Gilead*, pp. 160–61.

⁵³⁶ Thomas Watson: “Where there is union in fundamentals, there ought to be union in affections.” *A Divine Cordial...* (London: Parkhurst, 1663), ch. 9, p. 107. Thomas Walley, a New England divine: “Let those that agree in fundamentals and have union with the same Head, walk together in love and peace: this we are pressed to Phil. 3:16. Why should there not be a hearty love between those that are of the same Faith?” *Balm in Gilead to Heal Sion’s Wounds...* (Cambridge: S.G., 1670), p. 17.

⁵³⁷ Phil. 1:1, “with the bishops and deacons,” is no exception: There is a Church government for the good of the Church, as the apostles taught. While persons differ on what those terms, “bishops and deacons,” mean, yet one can have formal unity in that Scriptural principle while materially differing, even in practice, as to what those offices designated and entail, as our authors below will so helpfully manifest.

That the post-apostolic early Church largely taught the Church's bodily unity is found in the Faith's fundamentals⁵³⁸ was not accidental: The New Testament (not to mention the Old Testament)⁵³⁹ pervasively teaches it:

Acts 2:42 "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers."

1 Cor. 12:12-13 "For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body... and have been all made to drink into one Spirit."

⁵³⁸ Reynolds: "...some fundamental doctrines wherein all agree: this is the basis of unity and concord in the church. The ancients call it the rule of faith, seed of doctrine, the catholic faith, the character of the church, that which is common to small and great (Irenaeus, [*Against Heresies*] bk. 1, ch. 3; Nazianzen, *Orations* 14, 40; Augustine, *Enchiridion*, ch. 7; Tertullian, *Of the Prescription*, ch. 13-14; *Of the Veiling of Virgins*, ch. 1; *Athanasian Creed*; Irenaeus, bk. 1, ch. 1 [*Preface*]; Augustine, *Epistle* 57; see [Robert] Parker, *Of the Descent* [1611], bk. 4, §3." *Works*, vol. 5, "Brotherly Reconciliation," pp. 155-56. See the summaries (with the references) of the theology during the fourth and fifth centuries in Mastricht, *Theoretical-Practical Theology*, bk. 8, ch. 3, §25.

⁵³⁹ Gen. 17:10 "This is my covenant, which ye shall keep, between me and you and thy seed after thee; Every man child among you shall be circumcised."

Lev. 19:2 "Speak unto all the congregation of the children of Israel, and say unto them, Ye shall be holy: for I the LORD your God am holy."

Dt. 6:4-5 "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD: And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might."

Ex. 19:5 "Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people..."

Dt. 12:13-14 "Take heed to thyself that thou offer not thy burnt offerings in every place that thou seest: But in the place which the Lord shall choose in one of thy tribes..."

Josh. 5:2-3 "the Lord said unto Joshua, Make thee sharp knives, and circumcise again the children of Israel the second time. And Joshua made him sharp knives, and circumcised the children of Israel at the hill of the foreskins."

Josh. 24:14-15 "'Now therefore fear the LORD... and put away the gods which your fathers served... As for me and my house, we will serve the LORD."

Neh. 8:1-8 "All the people gathered themselves together as one man... and Ezra the scribe brought the book of the law... and read... and gave the sense, and caused them to understand."

Ps. 133:1 "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!"

Isa. 2:3 "Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD... and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths..."

Isa. 55:3-4 "Incline your ear, and come unto Me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David. Behold, I have given him for a witness to the people..."

Jer. 32:38-39 "And they shall be my people, and I will be their God: and I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear me for ever..."

Mic. 6:8 "what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?"

Zech. 3:9 "For then will I turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the LORD, to serve him with one consent."

Mal. 2:10 "Have we not all one father? hath not one God created us? why do we deal treacherously every man against his brother, by profaning the covenant of our fathers?"

Gal. 1:8 "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed."

Eph. 4:3–6 "Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all."

Phil. 1:27 "...stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel;"

Col. 2:6 "As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him:"

1 Tim. 6:3 "If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness..."

Heb. 6:1–2 "...the principles of the doctrine of Christ... the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment."

Jude 1:3 "ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints."

1 Jn. 1:7 "But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin."

2 Jn. 9–10 "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son."

Many more verses speak to this same effect.⁵⁴⁰

With respect to the Reformed, at a superficial glance at her institutional structures and standards in the Post-Reformation, it may be easy to infer they took a contrary approach; however this is misleading. The Reformed at the establishing of their Churches had the unity of mind and ability to unite the nation, not only on Christianity's fundamentals, but on the many secondary doctrines written into their confessional standards (which is a healthy and good thing). There is a difference, however, between one established Church, or that of a majority, in a nation or region, seeking greater conformity to the Word (while maintaining her unity and peace),⁵⁴¹

⁵⁴⁰ e.g. Rom. 6:17; 12:6; 1 Cor. 2:2; 3:10–11; Gal. 1:6; Eph. 4:13; Col. 1:23; 1 Tim. 3:16; 2 Tim. 1:13–14; Tit. 1:1; Rev. 14:1.

⁵⁴¹ See 'On Caution & Restraints in Reforming in Ordinary Circumstances, in doing so far as Peace & Order allows according to One's Calling, without Public Disturbance or Schism' at 'On Reforming & Reformation' (RBO) and 'On the Peace & Purity of the Church' (RBO).

and between multiple, divided Churches in a nation or region (all sound in the fundamentals), which ought to be one. The Reformed manifested their mind about the latter situation in their attempts at union with the Lutherans in the fundamentals of the Faith, especially in Germany.⁵⁴² The Reformed's theological ground for union is seen in numerous of her foundational and prominent writers, writing often in scope beyond their particular Church situations and relying on catholic Christian principles, teaching obliging, organic Church unity in the fundamentals.⁵⁴³

⁵⁴² See 'The History of Relations between the Lutherans & the Reformed' at 'On Lutheranism' (RBO).

⁵⁴³ Quotes follow from Calvin, Perkins, Draxe, Ball, Davenant, Dury, some French reformed divines, Hall, Brinsley, Bolton, Reynolds, Turretin, Mastricht.

Calvin: "How much the ministry of the Word and sacraments should weigh with us... so as to be a perpetual badge for distinguishing the Church, has been explained; for we have shown, first, that wherever it exists entire and unimpaired, no errors of conduct, no defects should prevent us from giving the name of Church; and, secondly, that trivial errors in this ministry ought not to make us regard it as illegitimate. Moreover, we have shown that the errors to which such pardon is due, are those by which the fundamental doctrine of religion is not injured, and by which those articles of religion, in which all believers should agree, are not suppressed, while, in regard to the sacraments, the defects are such as neither destroy nor impair the legitimate institution of their Author." *Institutes*, bk. 4, ch. 2, §1, p. 42.

Perkins: "the scribes and Pharisees, which were the doctors of that Church, erred in some fundamental points of doctrine, teaching justification by works: and withal they greatly corrupted the law of God, both by their doctrine and traditions... yet for all this, Christ did not separate from that Church, neither taught his disciples so to do, but was present at their sacrifices and assemblies, and kept his Passover with them: and so did his apostles, till they saw them of obstinacy and maliciousness refuse the grace of God, offered unto them in the ministry of the Gospel. Now their example must teach us that so long as our Church holds Christ, we must esteem it to be the Church of God, and not for some wants thereof depart from it." *A Godly & Learned Exposition of Christ's Sermon in the Mount* (Cambridge: Brooke, 1608), on Mt. 5:29-30, p. 136

Thomas Draxe: "we must not separate ourselves from such a Church, except it err in the fundamental points of faith and true religion; but we must herein comfort ourselves that this schism is without heresy." *The Christian Armory* (London: Hall, 1611), bk. 2, ch. 6, p. 88.

Ball: "The churches of God have been evermore taught to prize and esteem these main and fundamental truths and ordinances of worship at a higher rate than that some petty dislike of this or that in the external form (when the matter is sound and good) should cause Separation." "In matters fundamental, as the profession of faith must be entire in all points of simple belief, so must the doctrine of the Church in all things concerning practice: but errors of inferior alloy, wherein godly men dissent pardonably one from another, both concerning faith and practice, may be found and maintained in the true Church." *Friendly Trial*, ch. 8, pp. 155 & ch. 11, p. 228.

Davenant: "...the bands of brotherly communion ought not to be dissolved betwixt Christian Churches for all discords of opinions, but only for the opposing or denying of fundamental doctrines." *Exhortation to Brotherly Communion*, ch. 10, p. 113.

John Dury: "Now if it could be made plain to the divided Protestant Churches, that indeed the causes of their divisions are extra-fundamental, it may be truly and hopefully concluded that for conscience sake towards God and for their mutual edification and preservation against the encroaching power of darkness, they would be moved to leave off passionate disputations and laying aside the causes of their separation to compose their differences in brotherly love." *A Copy of Mr. John Dury's Letter... intimating the Necessity of a Common, Fundamental Confession of Faith...* (London: Underhill, 1643), pp. 2-3.

Some French reformed divines: "the constant and earnest wish of all good men for these hundred years past... that the Protestant Churches which differ one from another about some points of religion, laying aside or at least moderating on both sides their over-tenacious adhering to their own opinions, may now at length be united and made up into one body... we [the reformed and Lutherans] are not at variance about any fundamental point of Christian religion, or such wherein men may not safely be of either opinion without hazarding their salvation... we make no doubt but every man would then readily wish for this much-desired communion, which none ever shunned or refused but out of a kind of religion and conscience, conceiving it unlawful to entertain a communion with any that are not of the same belief and opinion with themselves: so soon as men on both sides shall be wrought off from this superstitious conceit, they will gladly run and rush (as it were) into one another's arms and embraces... how foul and scandalous a thing, how hurtful to both sides, how dangerous and pernicious to the whole Christian world this Schism is which has hitherto divided and distracted us... seeing we confess that whatsoever is of necessity for salvation to be believed or done by us, it is all clearly and plainly laid down in this Gospel, what hinders why we may not jointly confirm and ratify those articles wherein we both agree? and for those other points about which we differ, we may express them in such words and phrases as the sacred Scriptures afford us..." *The Opinions of Certain Reverend & Learned Divines concerning the Fundamental Points of the True Protestant Religion, & the Right Government of Reformed Churches* ([Oxford] Downes, 1643), "[Opinion of some Famous Divines of the French Church](#)," pp. 1-2, 24-26.

Joseph Hall: "Those articles of religion wherein the divines of both sides [of the reformed and Lutherans] do fully agree are abundantly sufficient, both for a Christian man's salvation and likewise for the establishing of a firm and lasting peace in the Churches of God. As for the rest... they are such as may perhaps not unfitly be sent to the divinity-schools, there to be thoroughly discussed: but by no means ought they to disquiet the peace either of any Christian soul or of God's holy Church... our good and gracious Savior passed over with silence and toleration great and grievous errors in comparison of these... and that too even in such as were of his own household and retinue." *Opinions of Certain Divines*, "[Opinion of Joseph Hall](#)," pp. 1-2.

John Brinsley: "Unwarrantable [schism] either for the ground or manner... Where a ground and cause is pretended, but it is but a light cause... some lesser errors in doctrine, not fundamental, nor near the foundation; some corruptions in or about the worship of God, but those not destructive to the ordinances, being not in substance, but in ceremony; and those such as the person offended is not enforced to be active in..." *The Arraignment of the Present Schism of New Separation in old England* (London: Field, 1646), pp. 24-25.

Bolton: "...this accommodation is not impossible: if indeed it were, God does not bind us to the seeking after it... If we look upon the nature of the things wherein they differ, they are not of such moment as to divide between brethren; their differences are not about fundamentals, but superstructures: there is no opinion expressly maintained by either side which is directly contrary to the substance of faith, or destructive to salvation; nay, whatever are such, they are condemned by both. Nor [is] the difference in those matters wherein they differ so wide but they may be composed and brought together, if men will act humility and self-denial. It was said of the differences between Luther and the [reformed] Helvetians, that there was not any impossibility in respect of the things themselves; if their spirits could be reconciled, their causes might easily be reconciled... where the difference is substantial, I do not see but if humility and self-denial might take place, if interests might be waved, if pre-engagements might be slighted, even in those things there might be an agreement; certainly, God does not make the difference so great as we ourselves do make it... It was the speech of one concerning the reconciliation of the German Churches: It is possible for the most hot and rigorous spirits to be reconciled, but it is easy for peaceable and moderate men to be agreed. The differences are not between enemies, but between brethren, and neither of them proud, imperious and contentious, but both of them humble, holy and peaceable..." *Arraignment of Error*, pp. 349-50.

Reynolds: "The second means for healing divisions in the church is to have... some fundamental doctrines wherein all agree: this is the basis of unity and concord in the church. The ancients call it the rule of faith, seed of doctrine, the catholic faith, the character of the church, that which is common to small and

Too Strong to Help the Weak? & Durham

The objection may arise: "But we have already attained far higher beyond the fundamentals than most other Christians in this nation, and we would have to go lower to so join and participate with them, which we cannot morally do." Yet so did Paul and Christ ([Phil. 2:5–8](#); [Heb. 2:11](#)). It is divine law, *jure divino*, both by nature⁵⁴⁴ and Scripture, for the stronger to relinquish rights and privileges for the here and now⁵⁴⁵ to help the weaker, for the greater good ([Ps. 40:6–8](#); [Mt. 5:38–48](#); [Mk. 15:3–5](#); [Jn. 10:15–17](#); [1 Cor. 6:4–](#)

great (Irenaeus, [*Against Heresies*] bk. 1, [ch. 3](#); Nazianzen, [Orations 14, 40](#); Augustine, *Enchiridion*, [ch. 7](#); Tertullian, *Of the Prescription*, [ch. 13–14](#); *Of the Veiling of Virgins*, [ch. 1](#); [Athanasian Creed](#); Irenaeus, bk. 1, [ch. 1](#) [[Preface](#)]; Augustine, *Epistle 57*; see [Robert] Parker, *Of the Descent* [1611], bk. 4, [§3](#). [1 Cor. 3:10–11](#); [2 Tim. 1:13](#); [Col. 1:23](#); [Eph. 4:13](#); [1 Tim. 3:16](#); [Gal. 1:6](#); [Rom. 6:17](#); [12:6](#); [2 Tim. 1:13–14](#); [1 Cor. 2:2](#); [1 Tim. 6:3](#); [Tit. 1:1](#); [Phil. 1:27](#); [Rev. 14:1](#))... 2. Where there is this agreement in fundamentals, there ought to be mutual and fraternal affections, notwithstanding differences in other things; no reproaches, no exasperations, no individious consequences, no odious imputations, no uncharitable digladiations; but an owning of one another as brethren and discussing and ventilating of the points in difference with the spirit of love and meekness, saying to one another, as Abraham to Lot, 'Let there be no strife between thee and me, for we are brethren.'" *Works*, vol. 5, "Brotherly Reconciliation," [pp. 155–57](#).

Turretin: "...the more strict Lutherans who (to render a union with us [Reformed] more difficult) extend fundamentals more widely than is just, turn almost every error into a heresy and make necessary those things which are indifferent so as more easily to prove that we differ on fundamentals." *Institutes* 1.48.

Mastricht: "The Lutherans on the contrary, by defect, decline fraternal fellowship with the Reformed, who by no means differ from them in the foundation. The Reformed pursue a middle way: (1) they reject the Socinians' Samaritanism, that is, fraternal fellowship with those who err in the foundation, and render it useless to us ([1 Cor. 3:12](#) with [Rom. 10:3–4](#); [Gal. 5:4](#)), being adduced: ... (c) by reasons, because the fellowship of the mystical body rests upon the unity of the fundamental faith ([Eph. 4:4–5](#)). (2) With churches that err concerning the foundation, that is, which teach such things whereby, through necessary consequence, the foundation is made to fail, they do not want to rashly break church fellowship, unless perhaps they exclude us ([1 Cor. 3:12](#); [Eph. 4:4–5](#); [Col. 2:19](#)), after the example of Paul, who due to errors of this sort, by no means separated from the churches of Corinth, Galatia, and Colossae." *Theoretical-Practical Theology*, vol. 5, bk. 7, ch. 1, [§35](#), forthcoming.

See also Durham below. This teaching of the Reformed is confirmed in their expressed sentiments that '[Church Government is a Secondary Teaching of Christianity & of Secondary Weight](#)' at 'Of Fundamental, Secondary & Tertiary Matters of Christianity...' (RBO).

⁵⁴⁴ London presbyterians: "in the present case of Church government, that which is agreeable to the true light of nature must needs be confessed to be of divine right... the light of nature teaches... 2. That in all matters of difference the lesser number in every society should give way to, and the matters controverted be determined and concluded by the major part; else there would never be an end: and why not so in the Church? 3. That in every ill administration in inferior societies the parties aggrieved should have liberty to appeal from them to superior societies that equity may take place; and why not from inferior to superior church assemblies?" *The Divine Right of Church Government*, new ed. (1645; NY: Martin, 1844), pt. 1, [ch. 3](#).

⁵⁴⁵ Dering told William Cecil (1520–1598), the foremost political figure in Elizabethan England and chief advisor to Queen Elizabeth, to exhort Cartwright, "to use Christian liberty and to bear with the time." Lake, *Moderate Puritans*, [p. 19](#).

8; 9:4–23; Eph. 5:25–26; Phil. 2:6–9; 1 Pet. 2:19–25; WLC 99.5), especially when called by Christ to do so (Mt. 28:18–20; Acts 9:15–16).⁵⁴⁶ Ought not the stronger and more excellent parts of the body, rather than ignoring or forsaking the weaker and less comely parts, unite with, serve and benefit them, covering them over with greater honor, as we ourselves do and God does (1 Cor. 12:23–24), “that there should be no schism in the body”? (1 Cor. 12:25)

Appealing to oaths and covenants contrary to this will do no good. Besides that ‘All Vows are Qualified’ and ‘Vows can Never Bind Beyond God’s Law’, Paul was bound, as we and every believer, by the Gospel-Covenant (Heb. 8:6–13), which is more strict (not to mention foundational) according to the standard of righteousness (Mt. 5:48) than the SL&C or any agreement, vow, oath or constitution you have or can bind yourself by. Your secondary standards can only ever bind you unto and as far as God’s Word, which openly binds unto the forementioned principle. Christ was bound by a more strict covenant⁵⁴⁷ (in some ways) than ours (Ps. 40:6–10; Isa. 52:13–53:12). His loving condescension to us, acting even as a Gospel-minister under the one government of his terribly marred Church, fallen far from her former attainments, did not break that covenant (thank God in the Highest), but fulfilled it.

Durham, who entered the ministry at what is considered the height of the Scottish Second Reformation, and was a covenanted leader thereafter, taught the forementioned principle.⁵⁴⁸ In his chapter on “General Grounds Leading to Unity” in his treatise on scandal,⁵⁴⁹ it is tempting to read his use of “orthodox” (whether men, ministers or Churches) throughout as referring to those who upheld the high bar of all the secondary Scriptural teachings of the Westminster standards, as the Church of Scotland did; but this is mistaken. Rather, the term, as the chapter and rest of the book shows in multiple places, refers not to that, but to ministers and Churches who uphold Christianity’s fundamentals, which is what Durham argued to be the Scriptural grounds for necessarily obliging,

⁵⁴⁶ For testimonies and instances of this in the Post-Reformation, see Fentiman, “Theses on the Ethics of Civil Voting, with a Correction to the Booklet, Christ Centered Voting”, “Choosing the Lesser of Two Evils”, point 27 at ‘On Voting’ (RBO).

⁵⁴⁷ See ‘The Covenant of Redemption’ (RBO).

⁵⁴⁸ See ‘That a Court might Waive a Ministerial Requirement for the Sake of Peace’ at ‘On the Governing of the Church & Church Discipline’ (RBO).

⁵⁴⁹ Durham, *Dying Man’s Testament*, pt. 4, ch. 7, pp. 314–35.

organic union into one Church.⁵⁵⁰ As Durham, the London presbyterians cautioned (as will our puritan authors):

⁵⁵⁰ With respect to the below (and especially to denominationalism), note especially Durham saying: "What cannot warrant a breach where there is union, that cannot warrantably be the ground to keep up a division;" *Dying Man's Testament*, pt. 4, ch. 7, p. 320. Durham, *Preface*: "Thou wilt also find [in this volume]... what things are to be forborne, and what is to be done in order to uniting, and that as well in closing doctrinal differences, not fundamental nor nigh the foundation..."

pt. 3, ch. 1, p. 278: "Thus contentions were hot in the primitive times for meats and such things which were neither of themselves destructive to the foundation of Faith on either side, at least in that time, and so were not heretical; nor did they break off communion in Church-ordinances, and so were not schismatical;"

pt. 4, ch. 7, pp. 316–18: "where union cannot be attained amongst orthodox ministers that agree in all main things (for of such only we speak)... that men should by agreement state a division in the Church, or dispense therewith, and prefer the continuing of division as fitter for edification than union, we suppose is altogether unwarrantable."

"That as union is ever a duty, so we conceive if men interested will do their duty, there can be no division amongst orthodox divines or ministers but it is possible also to compose it, and union is a thing attainable. For: 1. We are not speaking of composing divisions that are stated upon the fundamental things; nor are we speaking of removing all differences, as if all men were to be one in judgment in every point of truth; there may be difference where there is no division, as has been said. Nor, 3. when we speak of men's doing their duty, do we mean a full up-coming of everything in knowledge and practice..."

"That in endeavoring union and healing men would not straiten it to an universal union in everything, in judgement and practice, but would resolve to have it with many things defective that need forbearance in persons that are united, which men may take up in these particulars: 1. There may be difference of judgement in many things, I mean in such things that are consistent with the foundation and edification; and such a forbearance would be resolved upon, and to do otherways were to think that either men had no reason at all, or that their understandings were perfect, or at least of equal reach. 2... certainly, if people ought to carry even to corrupt ministers who yet destroy not the foundation, as ministers, in the duties that becomes them to ministers in communion with them, while they continue such, then certainly ministers ought to keep that communion with ministers, that becomes their relations, seeing they are still ministers in that respect, as well as in the other. And if this corruption will not warrant separation in other ordinances, as was said in the close of the second part, then neither will it warrant division in the ordinance of government."

p. 328: "...we may lay down these negative conclusions concerning the upmaking of a breach amongst godly and orthodox men, where a Church has harmony in the fundamental points, faith, worship and government, and where the thriving of the Gospel is mutually designed."

ch. 10, p. 354: "Possibly also union in fundamental things, being accorded unto, it may make way for moderating affections in other things less fundamental. This method was ever urged by Bucer, Beza and other Reformers, who keepped conferences at first with the Lutheran party..."

ch. 11, pp. 357 & 359: "For doctrinal differences of judgment, there are three ways to close them (it is to be adverted, that the difference is not supposed to be in any fundamental thing)..."

"there are many truths which are not decided by any judicial act; and amongst other things, sparingness to decide truths that are not fundamental judicially has been ever thought no little mean of the Church's peace, as the contrary has been of division."

ch. 14, p. 381 & 387–88: "We are not here speaking of such matter as is fundamental, but such as is consistent with soundness of judgement in the main, and piety in these who may be upon either side." "where there is nothing like a party or equality, but the division is in the same one Church betwixt a greater and smaller number, and the greater will not be induced to remove their determination; It is no way sinful to the lesser to join with them notwithstanding thereof they having their own freedom and liberty

"That doctrine that cries up purity to the ruin of unity is contrary to the doctrine of the Gospel. For the Gospel calls for unity as well as purity, [1 Cor. 1:10](#); [Phil. 2:1-2](#); [Eph. 4:3-6](#). And Christ prayed for the unity of his Church, as well as the holiness, [Jn. 17:21-22](#), and it is prophesied of the times of the Gospel that in those days God will give his people one heart and one way, and to serve Him with one consent, [Jer. 32:29](#); [Zeph. 3:9](#)."⁵⁵¹

[Heb. 6:1](#)'s exhortation, "let us go on unto perfection," is immediately qualified with, "this will we do, if God permit." ([Heb. 6:3](#)) A separatist use of [Amos 3:3](#), "Can two walk together, except they be agreed," is no better: Northern Israel, whom the verse is about ([Amos 3:1](#)), had overturned fundamentals of the Faith and morality ([Amos 3:10, 14](#)). God calls them to rectify this to restore his fellowship; and if He walk together with a people in their Church government, ought not we? "But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another..." ([1 Jn. 1:7](#)) Is this not lawful? Baxter wisely advised, speaking on behalf of the leading English presbyterian and Independent ministers (with nine Westminster divines) in 1661: "We... judge it best in lawful things for concord sake to conform to the custom of the churches where we live or come."⁵⁵²

Remaining Objections

Five remaining objections will be resolved, the first from Scripture: "But ministers must be able to teach and enforce right secondary doctrines, which Scripturally requires standards of ministerial communion to be set at a higher doctrinal bar than that of the profession of regular Christians in the fundamentals, per Jesus and Paul teaching

cautioned, as was formerly said; Yea, this seems not unexpedient that they should do for the good of the Church."

Durham in another work: "so there will readily still be different sentiments and apprehensions as to some lesser and lower truths further removed from the fundamentals of religion (where about all are agreed) and so proportionably as to practices among even truly godly men; it not being to be supposed that while saints sojourn and are militant here on earth, the intellectuals of all of them will be of the same size, or cast into the same mold, that their light will be of the same clearness, and that they will be all of equal mortification... So it speaks the necessity of mutual Christian forbearance, compassion and sympathy." *Heaven upon Earth...* (Edinburgh: Anderson, 1685), "[To the Readers](#)".

⁵⁵¹ London Provincial Assembly, *Vindication of Presbyterian Government*, p. 107.

⁵⁵² Baxter: "We never judged needless affected singularity a duty, but judge it best in lawful things for concord sake to conform to the custom of the churches where we live or come." *English Nonconformity*, ch. 3, p. 14.

secondary doctrines and [Tit. 1:9](#), that an overseer “may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict.” (NKJV)

While it is true there are higher qualifications on ministers to be able to teach ([1 Tim. 3:2](#); [2 Tim. 2:24](#)), yet so far as [Tit. 1:9](#) goes, the “sound doctrine” there mentioned only necessarily encompasses the Faith’s fundamentals, which the opposition, the Judaizers in [v. 10](#), threatened. While ministers ought to teach right secondary beliefs and practices for the Church’s well-being, yet not every difference in secondary things tends to overturn fundamentals or the power of godliness, or is intolerable; that which is so or so overturns may be enforced against. Nor what ought to be in ministers, must be in ministers in all periods and circumstances of the Church,⁵⁵³ as seen in even the apostles with hard-hearts not understanding or believing in the fundamental of Christ’s resurrection for a time, albeit not perpetually. ([Mt. 28:16–17](#); [Mk. 16:11–14](#); [Lk. 24:11, 37–38](#); [Jn. 20:9, 24–25](#))

Second, though it has been answered already, one may hear, as it is the profession of some: “But we are not advocating a greater purity than what has been obtained, to the ruin of unity, but only to maintain the purity we once have attained, while others have departed from that or have not yet come up to it.”⁵⁵⁴ Besides that this condemns all the righteous priests and Levites in the Old Testament who remained in the Church during grievously, declining or declined periods ([Num. 25](#); [2 Sam. 15:23–29](#); [2 Kn. 11](#); [1 Chron. 6:8–15](#); [2 Chron. 17:8–9](#); [Ezra 2:1, 36–40](#); [7:6](#); [Neh. 13:10–11](#)), and deficiencies in corporate purity do not necessarily entail personal sin ([Gen. 18:23](#); [Ex. 32:30–32](#); [Num. 16:22](#); [1 Kn. 19:18](#); [Eze. 14:13–14](#); [18:20](#); [Dan. 9:3–5](#); [Mt. 13:30](#); [Rom. 9:3](#); [1 Cor. 11:31](#); [Phil. 2:15](#); [Rev. 2:24](#); [3:4](#)), isn’t this kind of like saying: “We are able to do calculus, and if our brothers, who can only do algebra or less, never become able to do calculus, then Christ’s Church and visible family cannot be one?”

⁵⁵³ See the related section, ‘[On the Qualifications of 1 Tim. 3 & the Good Order of the Church](#)’ at ‘Pastors’ (RBO) which makes and documents the similar point from Scripture and reformed history that 1 Tim. 3’s qualifications are not absolute in every way.

⁵⁵⁴ There is more that is dishonest about this kind of reasoning: A person voluntarily chooses to join a Church or her ministry, bypassing others that are fundamentally sound, and therefore, by one’s own voluntary action one can no longer join with other fundamentally sound Churches? If one was born into such a better Church, how can one by being born and raised in this Church thereby go beyond the Word and no longer be obliged unto organic union with other parts of Christ’s fundamentally sound Church? “...learn... not to think of men above that which is written.” ([1 Cor. 4:6](#))

Third: "But the analogy is not the same: These things involve us in moral responsibility, and elders have a divine obligation to uphold the Lord's discipline in secondary things, both with officers and members in some respects."⁵⁵⁵ In some respects is affirmed,⁵⁵⁶ not denied, but is not discipline not to be wielded as a bat, but a cure? and if the cure so used be more harmful to the body than good, ought it not to be foregone and only means be taken that strengthen the body as a whole, especially in adolescents who ought to be growing into maturity? Does not Paul teach exactly this?:

"Wherefore, though I might be much bold in Christ to enjoin thee that which is convenient, yet for love's sake I rather beseech thee..." Phil. 1:8-9

"I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ... for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?" 1 Cor. 3:1-3

"I call God for a record upon my soul, that to spare you I came not as yet unto Corinth." 2 Cor. 1:23

"I speak to your shame. Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you?" 1 Cor. 6:5

"My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you, I desire... to change my voice, for I stand in doubt of you." Gal. 4:19-20

"Wherefore, though I might be much bold in Christ to enjoin thee that which is convenient, Yet for love's sake I rather beseech thee..." Phil. 1:8-9

"Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all men." 1 Thess. 5:14

"Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife... Notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretence, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice..." Phil. 1:15-18

There is quite a difference between the commendation of the Ephesians: "you cannot bear those who are evil," (Rev. 2:2) and allowing an upright minister to peaceably teach a secondary doctrine, albeit erroneous, yet consisting with the fundamentals, when the

⁵⁵⁵ See 'On How Church Discipline is Limited to Edification in its Time & Place, etc.' at 'On the Ordinances, Order & Policy of the Church' (RBO).

⁵⁵⁶ Right secondary teachings and discipline thereabout is for the integral whole and well-being of a true Church, but not of the essence of a true Church, just as a man with one hand is a man, having a man's essence, and yet is not a whole and flourishing man. Moral responsibility unto progressing in secondary issues resides habitually and eminently in the Church as Christ's body, able to arise out of it, and that naturally so in conducive circumstances, and yet it may not be, nor need be formally present or actually existent in every circumstance.

Church has not come to agreement on the issue. Not every disagreement must be divisive. Durham went so far as to teach, with Paul:

“...when many have been in the fault, there has been a forbearance [in exercising Church discipline]... “‘I would they were cut off that trouble you’ (Gal. 5:12). Why then would he [the apostle Paul] not cut them off? Because there was such a distemper among the Galatians, they were so bewitched and led away after the false teachers, and Paul’s authority was questioned; therefore he held himself at a wish and will not put forth the authority he had against those false and corrupt men.”⁵⁵⁷

Those who exaggeratingly refer to other Christian ministers sound in the fundamentals, albeit erring in other respects, as the sons of Belial or priests of Baal worshipping in the high places (which places were explicitly forbidden, Dt. 12:2-4, 13-14, and where literal, on-your-knees idolatry was used in the worship of YHWH or other gods, a matter of fundamentals or tending to overturn them),⁵⁵⁸ as the Separatists did,⁵⁵⁹ are not harmless, but slanderous;⁵⁶⁰ cure yourself of that warped intoxication and protect others from it.

Fourth, one may yet object with softer and more nuanced justifications for retaining their own separated association or denomination (as most evangelical Churches today), concluding:

“Though we do separate from you, yet we cannot stand charged with schism, because the nature of schism consists in an open breach of Christian love; and it is such a separation which is joined with a condemnation of those Churches from which they separate as false Churches, which we are far from.”⁵⁶¹

The London presbyterians rightly replied:

“We grant that to make up the formality of a schismatic, there must be added uncharitableness, as to make up the formality of a heretic there must be added obstinacy. But yet as he that denies a fundamental article of faith is guilty of heresy, though he add not obstinacy thereunto to make him a heretic, so he that does unwarrantably separate

⁵⁵⁷ Durham, *Collected Sermons*, vol. 1, sermon 61, “A Sermon on Eph. 4:11-12,” p. 923.

⁵⁵⁸ Lev. 26:30; Dt. 12:2; 1 Kn. 11:7; 14:23; 2 Kn. 18:4; 21:3, 5; 23:20; 2 Chron. 11:15; 14:3-5; 28:25; 2 Chron. 31:1; 33:3, 17-19; 34:3; Ps. 78:58; Jer. 32:35; 48:35; Eze. 6:6, 13.

⁵⁵⁹ Robert Browne, *An Answer to Master Cartwright...* (London: 1585), p. 48; Henry Barrow, *A Collection of Certain Letters & Conferences...* ([Dordrecht] 1590), p. 27; idem, *A Plain Refutation of Mr. G. Giffard’s Reproachful Book* (Dordrecht, 1591), pp. 2, 7, 63, 189, 216, 223.

⁵⁶⁰ Our authors below: “So was there still a true Church in Judah when the hill altars and high places were continued there (2 Kn. 14:4), which yet was a greater corruption in the worship of God than the ceremonies whereof question is made can possibly be accounted.” p. 248 below.

⁵⁶¹ London Provincial Assembly, *Vindication of Presbyterian Government*, p. 118.

from a true Church is truly guilty of schism, though he add not uncharitableness thereto to denominate him a complete schismatic.”⁵⁶²

Fifth, “But if we lost our own unified testimony to these secondary, Scriptural truths, they would be, if not at risk for being lost, at least greatly diminished and possibly taught and practiced against, even officially so by the whole Church, for a total lesser good.” It’s amazing the Holy Spirit did not think of or conclude that in teaching to the contrary in Scripture ([Rev. 2:24; 3:4](#)), or recommend it as a means to preserving secondary truths, by dividing the Body. In such circumstances it would nonetheless be possible to preserve and teach such truths and so far be unified in them with others⁵⁶³ (even before the printing press and internet: [1 Sam. 10:5–10; 19:20; 1 Kn. 18:4; 2 Kn. 2:3–7; 4:38; 6:1–2; Mal. 3:16–18; Mt. 3:5–7; Acts 1:13–14; 2 Tim. 2:2](#)). Scripture would remain the powerful source of these teachings and practices to anyone who sought to inquire therein. The future general resurrection was arguably a secondary doctrine under the Old Testament. This did not stop Jesus from both being in the Church, without separating, and rebuking the party with institutional control that publicly taught against the Resurrection ([Mt. 22:23–33](#)), telling them, “Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures.”

If the institutional Church were to err officially in such a matter, reform, not Separation, has been the answer of the reforming,⁵⁶⁴ according to what God says. ([2 Chron. 29:3–5; Neh. 8:8; Ps. 119:9; Isa. 1:16–17; Jer. 4:1; 1 Cor. 5:7; 1 Thess. 5:21–22; Rev. 3:2](#)) As for denominations that have unified and then sunk towards apostasy: besides that many unified denominations have not, that is a problem of not upholding, buttressing and living in the fundamentals, such as counting all things but loss for the

⁵⁶² London Provincial Assembly, *Vindication of Presbyterian Government*, p. 118. What warrants separation from a Church? The London presbyterians cite four causes from John Cameron: “1. When they that separate are grievously and intolerably persecuted. 2. When the Church they separate from is heretical. 3. When it is idolatrical. 4. When it is the Seat of Antichrist. And where none of these four are to be found, there the separation is insufficient and schismatical.” *Vindication of Presbyterian Government*, p. 114; John Cameron, *De Schismate in Ta Sozomena sive opera partim ab auctore ipso edita, partim post ejus obitum vulgata...* (Frankfurt: Schleichius, 1642), pp. 324–26. Note it is possible for a person or officer to morally remain in a denomination that will not seek union with other true Churches (which is therein guilty of schism), while the person would do so and is not personally guilty of schism.

⁵⁶³ A good example to follow from Church history was Thomas Cartwright and the partially-conforming, non-separating presbyterians in his English context, with our authors below following in that general trajectory. Another example is the Scottish presbyterians in the early-1600’s, as well as the indulged ministers in the late-1600’s.

⁵⁶⁴ See Fentiman, *Circa Sacra*, “Objection: What if the Magistrate’s Conscience is Wrong? Will Not the True Religion be Suppressed?” pp. 51–53.

excellency of the knowledge of Christ and other things [Phil. 3](#) and the rest of the book speak of.

Reckless Church union is not here being recommended; rather implementing union ought to be governed by nature's light and laws, Christian prudence and the general rules of the Word. Union ought not to be sought if it would do greater hurt than good, for instance, if the one Church would shred into oblivion, whereas the two Churches separate would at least maintain what good had preexisted. Churches coming together in at least the fundamentals is not being held out as all or nothing; rather it is a goal which may be worked towards as it is able to be borne and as progress can be made.

One ought not to separate, or remain separate, from a Church or Christians further than necessary,⁵⁶⁵ and our authors below will show how much we often take for granted is unnecessary. If separation is not necessary, then non-separation is lawful and one ought not to separate when it is not necessary. Bairdie gives wise counsel in advising to compose differences⁵⁶⁶ and weigh them in the balance:

⁵⁶⁵ Baxter: "In a word, 1. all that separate for a wrong cause, 2. or further than they separate from Christ, or than Christ would have them separate, do sin. 2. But they that renounce any corruption as such, and the Church no further than *secundum quid*, 'as it is' faulty, do well..." [Baxter on Worship](#), p. 85.

⁵⁶⁶ Bairdie lists some of the composed differences between the indulged ministers and non-indulged, which, when put this way, the separation of some of the non-indulged looks foolish when all agree on the same doctrine, government and worship, but only differ on particular application of principles to circumstances: "Whether this act be formally civil and only objectively ecclesiastical, and that only in a few particulars, the rest being civil, or whether the magistrate's error here be in the form, usurping an unjust power; or only in the matter, abusing his just power and misapplying it to unjust purposes, as sometimes he may do in civil cases..."

Whether it be altogether heterogeneous and incompetent, as well as it may be inconvenient, for the civil ruler to make civil laws and constitutions about the circumstances, order and exercise of matters of religion without the previous cognizance and pre-determination of the Church thereupon, and that even in the most broken and ruined state of the Church, when there is no governing Church existent that can be owned...

whether or no this act be properly an act of pastoral instructions (such as only Christ Jesus and no mortal man can give to his ambassadors)? or whether they be properly ecclesiastical canons (of the same formal and specific nature with Church decrees about matters of order)? Or whether they be only improperly and abusively called instructions and rules, as in some sense all laws, even civil, are said to be regulative and directive of practice?" [Balm from Gilead](#), pp. 76-77. On composing divisions, see Durham, *Dying Man's Testament*, pt. 4, [chs. 11, 12, 16, 18, 19, 20, 21](#) and Reynolds, *Works*, vol. 5, "Brotherly Reconciliation," pp. 152-53.

Bolton: "If we look upon the nature of the things wherein they differ, they are not of such moment as to divide between brethren; their differences are not about fundamentals, but superstructures... Nor [is] the difference in those matters wherein they differ so wide but they may be composed and brought together, if men will act humility and self-denial." [Arraignment of Error](#), p. 349.

“Were it not more your wisdom and happiness to be hearkening to the apostle’s rule, [Phil. 3:15–16](#), to be composing rather than heightening differences; and wherein ye agree, uniting and forbearing one another in points of difference till the Lord decide the controversy? otherwise the enemy may perhaps decide it with the broad sword.”⁵⁶⁷

Close

Two exhortations will be made in closing: (1) one of caution for those who are tempted or inclined to think all conformity is unlawful, and (2) the other of encouragement unto the virtue needed to unify Christ’s Church.

(1) To those who see and cannot deny the truth of much of these things but are yet suspicious toward them: While you ought not to quickly change commitments in the Lord’s things ([Lk. 14:28](#)), but digest them as long as needed till you are comfortable and confident they are the Lord’s will ([Rom. 14:5](#)), yet in doing so take heed that you not act like the weak in [Rom. 14](#). Those who were weak in the Christian Faith ([v. 1](#)) held excessive religious strictures and scruples, especially in practical matters, however inconvenient ([v. 2](#)). Their simplistic beliefs determined their actions, which set them apart from other Christians. They prided themselves in their strict living, self-denial and high standard ([v. 2](#)), taking what they thought was righteous grief, offense and scandal at things actually lawful ([vv. 20–21](#)), they not thinking them best or godly enough ([vv. 4–5](#)). They spoke ill of their Christian brothers, judged them ([vv. 3–4, 16](#), even Paul implicitly), whom they saw as worldly, licentious and not devoted enough, though their brethren were equally devoted ([v. 6](#)) and actually stronger and more understanding in the truth than they ([v. 14](#)).

The weak’s distinctives exemplified misplaced priorities, valuing certain external practices they considered to be religiously necessary above their brethren’s fellowship, and hence also above the fundamentals of “righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost,” in which the kingdom of God consists. ([v. 17](#)) The weak practically valued what they considered to be sanctification, and that in others, above other Christians’ faith and

⁵⁶⁷ Bairdie, [Balm from Gilead](#), p. 160.

justification (v. 18), that they are accepted with God forever in Christ, and He will make them stand. (v. 4) It was not only the strong, but the weak as well that were deficient in following “after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another.” (v. 19) If such a weak person began to teach their distinctives and seek to bind them on others, would not he be sectarian?

Yet how can the weak help themselves? Their principal problem, besides their prejudices, is ignorance (v. 14). They need to learn, not only from the brethren they look down on, but “by the Lord Jesus,” the fuller truth of Christian liberty, that in things not inherently unlawful, “there is nothing unclean of itself.” (v. 14) Consider if there be any truth in what the early English presbyterian and partial-conformist, [Laurence Chaderton](#), wrote:

“They make that sin which God has made none, that unlawful which He has made lawful; they make themselves servants whereas Christ has made them lords... having begun in the liberty of the spirit [paradoxically] they end in the servitude of the flesh.”⁵⁶⁸

The other main fault of the weak is censoriousness (v. 3, 10). How might that be rectified? Read anew the many spiritual reasons and realities Paul gives at length in: [vv. 3–13, 17–19, 22](#).⁵⁶⁹

(2) Secondly, while not every kind and degree of separation is a culpable schism ([Mt. 12:14–15; 15:2; 16:6; Lk. 13:31; Rom. 16:17–18](#)), as our authors below note, yet when the separations are voluntary, self-imposed and not necessary, such as in much of our evangelical denominationalism, these culpable schisms of Christ’s body, Paul says, reveal a deficit of a virtue we are lacking: “there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another.” We have to see that we are guilty of not having the same care for other Christians, and seek to live up to this (by the Spirit and power that rose Christ from the dead, [Rom. 8:11](#)), before anything will change. There

⁵⁶⁸ Lake, *Moderate Puritans*, p. 245.

⁵⁶⁹ Baxter: “But it is proud ignorance and lack of Christian love causing excommunicating, persecuting, Separation or schism in some, and withdrawing censorious Separation in others, who (neither party) understand the truth nor ever loved their neighbors as themselves, nor learned to do as they would be done by.” [On Worship & Catholicity](#), p. 60.

must not only be a concord of doctrine, but there ought to be a concord and harmony of affections, actions and ends as well:⁵⁷⁰

“walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.” (Eph. 4:1-6)

For a starter’s guide to progressing in Church unity, see pp. 119–21 of the London presbyterians’ *Vindication of the Presbyterian Government* and ‘*Towards Union in Secondary & Tertiary Matters*’ (RBO). One thing the London presbyterians say is:

“That it is the duty of all Christians to study to enjoy the ordinances of Christ in unity and uniformity, as far as it is possible, for the Scripture calls to unity and uniformity, as well as to purity and verity...”

Studying how to preserve unity and uniformity in purity and verity is what we have done, and what our authors below will further lead you in.

It is recognized, apart from a national reviving of the Word, it seems unlikely that such a union of Christ’s Church in America will come about along the lines of how that occurred at the Reformation and in the seventeenth century (however desirable that may be). Nonetheless, it is hoped the understanding put forth in our authors’ book below will contribute to greater unity amidst Christ’s fragmented Church today as Christians everywhere seek to do all by Christ’s Spirit⁵⁷¹ to the glory of God, according to his

⁵⁷⁰ “Joseph Caryl: “By ‘unity’ we mean the concurrence of men’s judgments, affections and actions about the same thing in one and the same way, and for the same end. By ‘forbearance’ we mean the refraining from uncharitable and unkindly affections and behaviors towards another in some things, although there be some difference between us and him in judgement and in the way of acting about these things.” *The Moderator: Endeavoring a Full Composure & Quiet Settlement of those many Differences both in Doctrine & Discipline, which have so long disturbed the peace and welfare of this commonwealth* (London: Bellamy, 1652), ch. 3, p. 24.

⁵⁷¹ Fleming: “6. Whatever sad differences be oft amongst these [Christians], which both their darkness of mind and contrariety of natural dispositions may influence, yet does not still that blest unity of the Spirit stand fixed and sure, by which the whole race of the saints are unite in a new and spiritual nature in these sweet and sensible communications of the Spirit, and do all meet in one blessed center, yea so near an intercourse of souls and sympathy does result thence (however the sad prevalence of corruption may for some time darken the same) as no union and concord like this is in all the societies of the earth, and may be such a witness to the truth of Christianity, as to silence even the greatest atheist.” *Church Wounded*, §4, p. 30.

Word.⁵⁷² To this end may we join in the closing prayer of Rathband and the authors of the Preface to Ball's treatise against Separatism:

“The Almighty speedily cast out of his Church all causes of
offence, clear up doubtful truths unto the hearts of his people,
compound all differences amongst brethren, make us all of one
mind, heart and way in his worship, that our divisions may no
longer dishonor the Gospel, distract the weak conscience,
disenable us to do that good we desire, or put weapons
into the hands of them who oppose that reformation,
the perfecting whereof our souls long for
through Jesus Christ.”⁵⁷³

⁵⁷² All working towards a common goal, as understood by them, is precisely the way the nature of things must and will fall out according to how God has created persons in reality. That is the best case scenario in any situation and *de facto* how the covenanting trajectory played out in Scotland: McDougall, *Covenants & Covenanters*, pp. 200, 211–12. Top-down or exclusive interpretations of such things will always fail as they go against God-ordained nature, as will all man-composed covenants held up as a standard. That is why Jesus taught his disciples to pray according to the whole will of God: “Hallowed by thy Name; thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth...” (Mt. 6:9–10)

⁵⁷³ “To the Christian Reader,” n.p. in Ball, *Answer to Two Treatises*.

A Refutation of the Errors of Separatists

English, Partially-Conforming Puritan Ministers

c. 1604–1609

Publisher, William Rathband
to the Reader

Christian reader, touching this ensuing treatise be pleased to understand that it was compiled (as you have it now without any addition or alteration) many years since by sundry reverend and godly ministers of this kingdom who in their times stood out and suffered in the cause of non-conformity to the ceremonies⁵⁷⁴ and labored the reformation of things then, and still in part remaining amiss in our Church: therein endeavoring both for opinion and practice to keep close to the rules of Scripture and with what in them lay to eschew all errors and exorbitances, both of separation on the right hand and of superstition on the left.

Who the men were by name is neither now necessary to be published, nor in respect of them all, certainly known. But what sort of men they were that made it, and of what

⁵⁷⁴ The (mostly) imposed ceremonies included ministers and others wearing vestments (e.g. surplice, cope, cassock, tippet, hood, etc.), kneeling to receive the Lord's Supper, observing saints days, evangelical feast days, using a wedding ring in weddings (such had been superstitiously abused by Romanists), having a cross in worship, crossing, crossing the infant's forehead in baptism, bowing to the table, bowing at the name of Jesus, men taking hats off at the door of the church, standing at the reading of the Gospels, restrictions about Godfathers, churching of women, rites about funerals, confirmation by the necessary laying on of hands by bishops, exorcism at baptism, etc. These rites, most of which derived from the Anglican Book of Common Prayer, were objected to in various degrees. See 'On Ceremonies' (RBO), especially 'Critiques of the Anglican Book of Common Prayer' (RBO).

piety, charity, modesty and ability for this controversy they were, the treatise itself by its own light will sufficiently discover to the impartial and unprejudiced reader. It is now presented to public view (after so long detainment) because:

First, the press is now more free and open (than in former times)⁵⁷⁵ to books of this nature, which do so oppose the schism of the Brownists, as not at all to allow of the tyranny and corruptions of the bishops.

Secondly, it seems now more needful than formerly through the late lamentable increase of opinions and practices of separation⁵⁷⁶ and the dangerous rents already made and likely to be made thereby, even to the utter ruin of this Church, if by the mercy of our God and the wisdom of our king and parliament some timely and effectual remedy be not provided.

Thirdly, hereby (good reader) you may see that the opinions and practices of those that way addicted now so much extolled, wondered at and greedily embraced by many under the notion of new truths and a new and further light (as if some new created star had now appeared to the world never seen before) are indeed no other for substance but the old errors and dotages of Barrow and Greenwood long since by them published and by the godly, sober and judicious in those times opposed and exploded. Save that now, like rusty weapons, they are newly furbished and, being but the same metals and materials, are only cast into a new mold with addition of some things more of the same sort than they expressly held, mitigation of others things by them more sharply and rigorously delivered and interlaced with other things more pleasing and plausible to make the rest relish and vent the better.

Fourthly, hereby also you may perceive and take up the true judgment of the true ancient and present non-conformists of this kingdom in these points as from their own mouth and pen.

Whereof (by the help of God) you may make these and the like uses:

⁵⁷⁵ The press in that era had been regulated since 1559 but became much more censored, especially under Archbishop Laud in 1637, till Long Parliament opened up the press in greater measure in 1641–1644.

⁵⁷⁶ There was a great proliferation of sects, especially about London, in the early 1640's, due to the abolition of the censoring Star Chamber (1641) and the civil war between parliament and the king (which led to a vacuum in the enforcement of laws). For materials against Separatism, see '[On Schism & Separatism](#)' (RBO).

First, you may clear the non-conformists in thy thoughts from the misrepresentations and imputations both of the Episcopal and Schismatical party, both of which would make the world believe that the non-conformists have laid the foundation of Brownism by their principles of non-conformity; and that if this be lawful, the other must needs be necessary: The former sort thus suggesting to lay the greater hatred upon them and the cause of reformation which they promoted; the latter sort to procure the greater credit to their own irregular and unwarrantable courses thereby. (And would to God that some other brethren, though of a far better sort and such as have long groaned under their conformity, had not been or yet were not too credulous to such unlikely and unreasonable suggestions against their brethren.)

Secondly, you may see that the cause of Separation may be confuted without relinquishing on the one part the grounds of non-conformity⁵⁷⁷ or leaning at all unto episcopacy.⁵⁷⁸ As the cause of non-conformity may be fully maintained without fetching weapons from or betaking ourselves unto the camp of Separation, which thing I could wish with all my heart had been well observed by some (otherwise godly and judicious brethren) in these days who no sooner begin to distaste and cast off their old burden of superstitious conformity (of late augmented and made utterly unprofitable by sundry other innovations) but withal they begin to dislike all set forms of prayer especially in our Liturgy as unlawful, to question their own present standing in the ministry as Antichristian and to abstain from our worship, especially our sacraments, as idolatrous, with other like unreasonable opinions and practices: as if it were not possible for men to leap out of the surplice⁵⁷⁹ unless also they leapt out of the Church, and as if there were no middle between separation from (1) the Church and the true worship thereof and (2) subscription unto or practice or approbation of all the corruptions in the same: an error in some sort formerly excusable when oppression and persecution made even wise men themselves mad (as Solomon says, [Eccl. 7:7](#)) and sometimes in haste between fear, grief and anger in avoiding one extreme to fall upon another. But now since that by the miraculous mercy of God the stings of those great bees are pulled out and their horns sawed off

⁵⁷⁷ For literature on nonconformity, see 'On Conformity' (RBO).

⁵⁷⁸ For materials against episcopacy, see 'On Prelacy & Episcopacy' (RBO) and 'Presbyterianism' (RBO).

⁵⁷⁹ The surplice was a white, loose fitting garment coming down to about the knees which clergy were required to wear during worship services.

[with the onset of the Long Parliament in the early-1640's], whereby they have so long afflicted and willingly destroyed this poor Church: I say now methinks wise men should look before they leap and so warily eschew one error as that they do not unwarily run into another, perhaps a worse.

Lastly, you may be somewhat stayed from hasty adhering or inclining to their courses of separation not only by the treatise itself, but also by the consideration of the treatisers. For though no man's person whatsoever can be a sufficient bottom whereon to settle any opinion or practice in religion, but the Word of God and right reason alone,⁵⁸⁰ yet is not these men's example or testimony to be altogether slighted, especially in this controversy wherein we are sometimes almost deafened with the praises of some of the Separators' eminent learning, piety, sincerity, zeal, etc. In which case I hope it need not be offensive to any, perhaps it may be profitable to some (according to the apostle's example in a case not altogether unlike, [2 Cor. 11:22](#)) to oppose these men's learning, piety, sincerity, zeal, etc. against the others, who, as in all other things they were examples of holiness, so in this, that they have ever not only forborne, but steadfastly opposed to their great reproach, damage and danger many ways the corruptions in our Church-government, worship and Liturgy, and have been lights and leaders to these latter times therein, yet always in a peaceable and regular way, as not on the one side to subject themselves to suspicious inventions, so on the other, not sinfully to separate from the communion and true worship of Churches, accounting it more agreeable to all rules of piety, charity and Christian prudence to tolerate for the time what they could not mend, rather than to rent and tear all in pieces to an utter ruin.⁵⁸¹

To conclude: though perhaps some few particulars in this treatise may seem more questionable,⁵⁸² yet for the main I doubt not but the authors have held close to the truth, both in their own positions and in opposing their adversaries. By which therefore (good reader) you may reap much benefit for thy better settling in these unsettled times, if you

⁵⁸⁰ See '[Scripture Upholds Nature's Light & Law & Right Reason](#)' at 'The Sufficiency of Scripture' (RBO).

⁵⁸¹ See '[When Impurities in Worship cannot be Reformed](#)' at 'On Impurities in Worship' (RBO).

⁵⁸² One instance may be the authors arguing that the suspension and deposition of ministers by bishops, though upon insufficient grounds, ought to be yielded unto. Rathband was silenced in his ministry and yet did not fully yield to this. See [pp. 265–66](#) below with [footnote 703](#).

be capable thereof and if the Lord shall please to add his blessing thereunto, which he shall never cease to pray for who is (all that he is) truly thine in Him,

William Rathband

Authors' Preface to the Reader

The holy apostle, saint Paul, writing unto the Galatians these words, "Brethren, if any man be fallen by occasion into any fault, you which are spiritual, restore such a one with the spirit of meekness, considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted" [[Gal. 6:1](#)], both shows (1) the danger of falling, whereunto they are subject who stand in the Church of God, and (2) prescribes the duty of recovering those that are fallen unto such as are spiritual, that is to say, as are furnished with gifts thereunto, with the manner how all that ought to be performed: [these being] two necessary points in our judgments to be considered and much tending to the preservation of the good and happy estate of the Church of God. For how comes it to pass that Satan so far prevails against it that weak men consider not the danger of falling until they be down and almost past recovering, and those that are fallen either consider it not at all, or not until they be well near without remedy?

It is therefore one special part of holy wisdom for men who think they stand to take heed lest they fall, and therefore to seek to know the depth of Satan's policies and subtleties [[2 Cor. 2:11](#)], and then the effectual means for the preventing of them: into which if they carefully inquire, they shall find that though he seek to draw even those that have shined as stars in the Church from heaven unto the earth, yet that he much more earnestly labors to make them wandering stars [[Jude 1:13](#)], forsaking the place wherein they seemed to be fixed to give shine and direction to others; that is, though he labors and endeavors to bring men from their first love [[Rev. 2:4](#)] and zeal unto a lukewarmness or key coldness in the Church [[Rev. 3:16](#)], yet he rather desires to lead them into a fiery spirit and indiscreet zeal⁵⁸³ from the Church and society of saints, which no doubt he does as for many other causes, so for these two:

⁵⁸³ Fleming on differences about the Indulgence: "...these high pretenses of zeal and fervency for the truth in the way of some as would seem most visibly to cross and interfere with the most known principles of Christian prudence, yea that due necessary use of men's reason which the Scripture does so indispensably require.

Answer:... the true and native tendence of the zeal of God and fervency in his work can cause no breaking or disorder, nor has any irregular, violent motion or scorching heat therewith; but wherever this most brightly shines, there also does a humble tender condescendence to convince and gain most evidently appear... for such should be the greatest acrimony and sharpness of these who should be the salt of the earth that it may always tend to season, to preserve and recover, and not to destroy.

1. That he might by their departure, who have seemed zealous and godly professors, shake the faith of others and cause them to doubt that they are not in the true Church, where they may find directions toward the kingdom of heaven, and at last to fly from it as from Babylon.
2. And that he might deprive those men themselves of the happy means of the recovery which they might have had easily applied, had they been in the Church and remained in the fellowship thereof.

Hence it is that in the Church of God, those who, breaking the holy bands of love and faith, have like unkind children forsaken her their natural mother and oft pleaded with her as a strumpet [prostitute], which never was done in more convenient manner than of late by certain of our brethren, who having been brought forth of the womb and brought up in the bosom of the Church of England, have not only renounced her as a stepmother, but condemned her as one of the daughters, yea the eldest daughter of the very whore of Babylon [Rev. 17:1], railing on her as if she, living in continual spiritual fornications, brought forth sons and daughters not unto Christ, but unto Antichrist, his adversary: by which their faults and fallings, as they have deprived themselves of those gracious blessings which they did long, and might have still, enjoyed amongst us to their souls' health, and made the means of their recovery more hard and difficult, so have they troubled and disquieted many remaining in the body of our Church and of strong men

3. And is not Christian wisdom and prudence a piece of our sanctification and a true and native result of pure zeal and love to Christ... the more a Christian, the more tender thus to keep by the rules and to walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise (and is not men's folly still a fruit of their own corruption), nor can the truth of godliness be vigorously exerted, but so far it will cause also such a sweet composure, and even temper of spirit as to watch with an equal advertance to extremes upon either hand.

4. It needs be no strange thing or give any advantage to bring true zeal under discredit that there may be a more impetuous motion and making haste by some when they are out of the way than they were formerly for the truth; it being too evident, such as are once under the influence of delusion are also in that dreadful hazard to be as winds carried about with a tempest; but such is pure zeal that though it increase the stream, it does not overflow its banks; nor will break the least command for vindication of the greatest truth.

5. There is such an indissoluble tie by the Holy Ghost betwixt true zeal and that Christian moderation; which we should make known to all, as none may divide; but as the one tends to give life and intenseness of duty, so is the other to restrain all exorbitancy and keep this in its proper channel; and that none be carried out beyond these just bounds and measures which are so expressly set to us by the rule, but so as that it be without any lukewarmness or abatement of fervency in spirit for serving the Lord; for where on either hand these are divided, the credit of the truth, and true interest of the Church, must then needs suffer and get a sore wound." *Church Wounded*, §4, pp. 35-36.

in the truth, brought them to be children again in understanding [1 Cor. 14:20], easy to be carried about with every blast of diverse and strange doctrines [Eph. 4:14], how contrary soever to the truth according unto godliness [Tit. 1:1] that was either taught or received by them.

The case thus standing, we take it to be our duties, being members and ministers of this Church, having by God's grace received some, though a small measure of gifts fit thereunto, as to maintain the credit of the Church wherein we live and to justify the practice of our ministry therein, so far forth as truth will permit: so chiefly to seek and endeavor both the recovery of those that are strayed from the sheepfold of Christ amongst us, and also the stay of those that are ready to run after them, together with the better grounding and confirming of them who remain in the flock with comfort under their shepherds; which duty we have endeavored to perform heretofore by public preaching and private conferences as occasions have been offered, and now have bestowed our labors in writing this following treatise to the same end, wherein, after we have proved by certain reasons that our assemblies are the true Church of God, we take upon us to show:

First, that the four most chief exceptions they take against our Church for warranting schism and separation from us are vain and frivolous.

Secondly, that the main grounds they stand upon for the erecting their new Church are weak and slender.

Thirdly, that the best arguments that they use for condemning us and justifying themselves are loose and insufficient.

Which points which we have gathered out of their printed books and written papers (where they were before scattered) and brought into one form and body, so have we more plainly and nakedly both proposed and dealt in, passing by all impertinent and offensive matters and their flouting declamations, petitions, exclamations and bitter reviling speeches against our churches, ministers and people, all their reproachful slanderous profane scornings, fearful blasphemies against the Word preached and sacraments administered, prayers and holy exercises of religion used in our assemblies (wherewith their writings and printings swell to some bigness as bladders puffed up with wind): all these, though we have given the reader some taste of their spirit in them, yet have we not in our treatise stood upon them, as we judge them not worthy to answer.

This work of ours we commend:

First unto our brethren departed from us, desiring them to read it without partiality, self-love, prejudice or other sinister affections, and with meekness, indifferency and love of the truth, desire to be informed and readiness to be reformed where they err and go astray:

It may be that God will give a blessing to it, nay sure we are that He is faithful that has promised to give unto those that ask, to open to those that knock and to cause them to find that seek the truth in sincerity of their hearts [Mt. 7:7-8], especially if to the reading thereof, they adjoin:

First, a review of the books which have been written by the ring-leaders of their separations;

Secondly, a view of the persons of whom their assemblies consist; and

Thirdly, a consideration of the estate wherein their Church now stands.

Firstly, in the review of the books which have been written, we exhort them:

With single hearts to examine the spirits wherewith the authors of them were led in their writing and they shall find it not to be the good Spirit of God which fills men's hearts with meekness, humility, compassion, softness, holiness and other sanctified affections, but that evil spirit of Satan which under color of zeal of God's glory, hatred of sin, desire of serving God in sincerity, thrusts men whom it has deceived into pride, self-love, rashness, unnatural affections, uncharitable surmises and most unchristian judgment of their brethren.

Secondly, to weigh wisely what end they proposed to themselves in their writings, which will evidently appear to be not so much the clearing of themselves from the crime of schism, as the drawing of others to join with them and the defacing of our Church, which they compare with the most idolatrous and heathenish nations that ever were, yea with Sodom and Babylon itself, and the disgracing the ministers thereof, especially those whom heretofore they have most revered, whom they sort with most

wretched miscreants: Judas, Cain, Balaam and many others, upon whom the Spirit of God has set a fearful brand of eternal condemnation.

Thirdly, to try carefully the allegations of Scripture wherewith they have fully painted the margins and with the multitude whereof they have astonished the simple or credulous readers, persuading them that their cause stands upon the same ground of God's holy Word: and they shall plainly perceive that the places by them alleged do for the most part prove that which we deny not; and if they be brought to confirm the matter in controversy, they are either unconscionably or ignorantly wrested against or beside the meaning of the Holy Ghost.

A second thing which we entreat them to do is to view the persons of whom their assemblies consist and let them tell us how many of them there be whom they have brought from gross ignorance unto true knowledge, from infidelity to holy Faith, from profaneness of life to a conscionable walking with God: if there be scarce any amongst them which have not been of some note in our churches for holy and sincere profession and if they had no good thing in them which they have not received by the ministry of those men and in the bosom of those Churches which now they condemn and fly from. Why then take they the seal of our ministry and Church [1 Cor. 9:1-2; 2 Cor. 3:1-3] and set it unto their blank?

Thirdly, we exhort all of them to a survey of their estate wherein they stand, which is (if that be true which by some of their own has been reported) full of disorder and confusion; and indeed how can it otherwise be, as they teach that every member of their Church may and ought to stand up against their ministers and elders to gainsay them in delivering of doctrine and withstand the other in the execution of discipline if he be persuaded the one errs from the truth and the other fails in justice. Is not this to make every member an eye, an ear, a head? [1 Cor. 12:16-21] And must not men be of angelical perfection to preserve unity where such a large liberty is granted unto them?⁵⁸⁴

⁵⁸⁴ These exhortations to the Separatists in the early-1600's are similar to those that the later London presbyterians would give the same in 1649-1650, showing, if not direct dependence, at least that the trajectory of the polemic against the Separatists by presbyterian-minded ministers remained substantially the same through those decades: *Vindication of Presbyterian Government*, pp. 122-29.

A second sort of persons to whom we commend this labor of ours be our brethren also, who by the writings, doings and sufferings of these deceived men are in danger likewise to be deceived, being brought to halt between two opinions. [1 Kn. 18:21] These also we pray to read it with a holy purpose to be fully resolved and settled in the truth. We hope their labor shall not be in vain if they will accept from us these few advertisements:

First, that they make not the example of any man, seem he never so godly, religious and zealous, but the Word of God only, the rule of their belief and life: Paul himself must be followed no further [1 Cor. 11:1]. When the holy precepts of the Word and the examples of the godly join together, we have the one to teach us, the other to incite us to do our duties. [Heb. 10:24]

Secondly, that they carry a humble and lowly conceit of themselves and their gifts. That they remember that “if any man think he knows anything, he knows nothing as he ought to know,” (1 Cor. 8:2) and that “if any man seem to himself that he is somewhat, when he is nothing, he deceives himself in his imaginations.” (Gal. 6:3) That to this purpose they occupy themselves in consideration of their own lacks⁵⁸⁵ and sins which cleave so fast unto them, rather than in marking the blemishes and noting the faults that are in others, following the counsel of the apostle, “Let everyone prove his own work and then shall he have rejoicing in himself only and not in another.” (Gal. 6:4)

Thirdly, that they have a reverend opinion of those men by whose ministry they have been begotten unto God [1 Cor. 4:15] or nourished in the truth, by whose labors they have been instructed, confirmed and comforted, in whose mouths the Word of God has been unto them as a two-edged sword, entering through them unto the dividing asunder the soul and spirit, the joints and the marrow, that they suffer not a sinful thought to enter into their heads of their vocations being unlawful, who have their hearts and souls as seals of their ministry [2 Cor. 3:1-3] and may say to them as Paul to the Corinthians, “Are ye not my work in the Lord, if I be not an apostle unto others, yet doubtless I am unto you, for you are the seal of mine apostleship in the Lord” (1 Cor. 9:1-2); whereof they should therefore be the more careful for that it has been an ancient and ordinary policy

⁵⁸⁵ Throughout this treatise the older term “wants” has been replaced by “lacks”.

of Satan that he might cause men to refuse the Word brought unto them in the mouths of the prophets, apostles and other men of God, yea of Christ Himself, to persuade them that they had no warrant of their vocations and calling from God. [Mt. 21:23]

Fourthly, notwithstanding all that is said for their instruction and reformation in this behalf, if they keep a liking of that draught of a Church which our deceived brethren have framed and commended in their writings, and desire to join themselves unto their society, that they yet remember it is a part of wisdom to stay the full establishing of their Church and practice of the ordinances thereof for a time that they may see what blessings of God be upon it for the ratifying and approving of their doings: for if it be of God it will stand as a house founded upon a sure rock; if it be of men, it will come to naught. [Acts 5:39-39]

A third sort to whom we commend this work of ours are our stronger brethren which continue with comfort in the society of their Church: them we entreat that if they find any confirmation or strengthening unto their consciences by the pursuing hereof, any increase of knowledge and ability to maintain the truth of our Church, sacraments and Word, to defend the lawfulness of our ministry and practice of God's external worship amongst us, that first they praise God whose gift it is that anything is spoken or written for their edification, instruction and consolation, and then bestow the same as occasion shall be offered to the reclaiming of those that are strayed, and in holding them that are ready to wander.

We lastly commend this simple travail of ours to the Church of God whereof we are unworthy ministers, beseeching her to accept our poor endeavors, for we are not ignorant that the labors which we have taken in this cause will be diversely judged of according to the manner and affection of those men to whom this work shall come.

Some, as namely our deceived brethren against whom we deal, will hold it damnable and execrable, as being bestowed against the Church of Christ, against the saints and children of God, against the holy truth taught in the Testament of Christ; yea, and that contrary to the light of our own consciences and knowledge of our own hearts.

To the first part of this their charge and accusation, we answer: That whether they or we be the true Church of God,⁵⁸⁶ whether they or we have the truth taught in the Testament of Christ is the matter in controversy betwixt us. If we be the Church of God and have the truth of Christ, as we hope shall appear by this treatise, then have they written and spoken against the Church of God, and that in most shameful and fearful manner. If they be the true Church of God and have his truth (which we assure ourselves they shall be never able to prove), then have we spent our labors against the Church of God: But have we done it wittingly and willingly against the light of our hearts?

This is indeed the second part of their charge: But who made them the searchers of our hearts [[Jer. 17:10](#)] and judges of our consciences [[Rom. 14:10](#)] that they should accuse us to another and quench the light of truth which has shined into our souls, especially when they hear our protestations to the contrary? Where is that charity that thinks none evil, which hopes all things [[1 Cor. 13:5, 7](#)]? We say therefore, unto the second part of their accusation, with the apostle, we say the truth in Christ, our consciences bearing us witnesses in the Holy Ghost that we can say nothing against the truth; but for the truth, wittingly and willingly. [[Rom. 9:1](#); [2 Cor. 13:8](#)] And in the testimony thereof we pray God that our tongues may cleave to the roof of our mouths [[Ps. 137:6](#)] when we endeavor to speak, and that our pens may stick to the ends of our fingers when we attempt to write anything against the Church, children or truth of God.

Some others, fathers and brethren, ministers and members with us of this Church, finding by our manner of writing of what judgment we are, will hold our pains requisite and necessary to stay the course of these waters which we have given passage unto and to make up the breaches we have opened by speaking against the government established in this Church, the ceremonies used therein and other of our unadvised dealings in the execution of our ministry. To these men we say:

First, that as we have been and are persuaded of the truth of these things which we have delivered touching the defects and lacks, the blemishes and deformities of this Church, so have we in the sincerity and uprightness of our hearts dealt for the redress

⁵⁸⁶ The phrase “true Church” in that era often conveyed more than being part of the visible Church in a minimal sense, entailing being a sound and healthy Church. See ‘[On the Reformation & Puritan Categories of the True Church & False Churches](#)’ at ‘The Church’ (RBO).

and reformation thereof: wherein, though we know nothing by ourselves before men more than truth will permit, if they should have taken occasion by our doctrine (which we persuade ourselves to be the doctrine of the truth) to make this schism, yet were this no reason to reprove us unless those men which have set down true positions are to be blamed as authors of the false collections and conclusions which are inferred and gathered thereupon.

Secondly, we answer that our deceived brethren do no less condemn those Churches of God as the synagogues of Satan where the doctrine which we have taught touching the government of the Church and matters of ceremonies is maintained, and where all things which we hold offensive in our Church are abolished, than they do the Church of England, insomuch that they have written of the Church of Geneva (which is holden to be the best pattern of a Reformed Church), that it became a miserable precedent and pernicious example even unto all Europe: whereby it is evident that they have been brought unto this schism by some other inducements than the dealing of those men in the execution of their ministry who are charged to be the occasions, if not the authors thereof.

Thirdly, there is such difference and plain contradiction between them and us in judgment, yea in the matter of discipline and Church government, besides many other material points of doctrine, as we marvel any men should esteem us causes of their defections from this Church, much more that any [conformist] man should write that between the Brownists and others (he means them and us) there is no controversy as touching the framing of a Church by the Word of God.

A third sort of our loving brethren, approving our care of God's Church and desire to reclaim poor deceived souls, will yet happily esteem our labor altogether needless and superfluous, as spent and bestowed both against a cause that has so little show of truth and semblance of probability, nay, so evident appearance of falsehood and vanity as it is rather to be despised than confuted, and also upon men whose zeal and rashness so far prevails over sound judgment and discretion, that we shall rather sharpen and increase their humor (by thinking them worthy of answering) to a further contradiction than either inform their understanding by sound reason or alter their affection by efficacy of any persuasion. These brethren we desire to give us leave to dissent from them who judge far otherwise of this cause: we handle and hope much better of the persons against whom we deal.

For the cause itself we say:

That though it did appear, as it is indeed, full of falsehood and vanity unto these that have the gift to discern between those things that differ and withal to temper their affections (which is the reason it prevails not with any such to their seduction), yet unto men of weak judgments and strong affections, or of more heat than knowledge, it seems far otherwise, who are not in our judgments to be contemned and suffered to be so headlongly carried in so violent a course, but rather with compassion to be reclaimed and with meekness to be restored by such as are spiritual, if it please the Lord to give a blessing to their labor so spent and employed.

Secondly, seeing this heresy of theirs does not only seek to untile the House of God built amongst us, nor to break down the walls only, but even to overthrow the whole frame thereof, taking away the pillars whereon it stands, the preaching of the Word and administration of the sacraments: yea digging up the very foundation thereof and taking Christ from us, whom (as they say) we preach not but deny in all his offices: were the falsehood and blasphemy thereof never so apparent, yet were not the labor needless and superfluous that is spent in confuting thereof.

Thirdly, seeing this cause has been thought to be of such weight and regard that it has brought the High Court of Parliament to make a sharp law for the preventing of the mischiefs thereof, shall it be thought a matter unnecessary and fruitless for ministers to deal withal, especially where political laws can but draw the outward man to conformity, which is but hypocrisy unless the Law of God be annexed thereunto for the converting of the soul and bringing the inward man to do that inwardly and sincerely which outwardly it performs.⁵⁸⁷

⁵⁸⁷ On this method, see Fentiman, *Circa Sacra*, pp. 54–55 with fn. 181; p. 74, fn. 221; pp. 77–78. Rutherford speaking of a Christian society: “...the magistrate is not to compel to profession of the truth immediately and without any foregoing information of the mind; for the Church is to teach and instruct in all the external acts of worship before the magistrate does compel to these acts;”

“we think not any should be put to death for simple heresy, as Musculus (*Common Places*, p. 1,329) and Whittaker (*To Campian.*, p. 234) teach, they are to be instructed, censured, rebuked, eschewed...” “That this may be answered: 1. The object of these opinions would be distinguished. 2. The persons, weak or strong. 3. The manner of refusing instruction or of admitting light, of mere weakness or of obstinacy.”

“The magistrate judges not what is true and false to be believed simply, as teaching, instructing and informing the conscience, but only what is true and false to be believed or professed in relation to his sword and bodily punishment or civil rewards.” “he is to compel and punish with the sword, not by instructing and teaching.” *The Due Right of Presbyteries* (London: 1644), pt. 2, ch. 6, pp. 355–56, 359, 377, 406 & 429–30.

Lastly, we have the examples of diverse learned and godly brethren to warrant our doings and to persuade us of the necessity of this labor, who either by commandment from authority or of their own motions by occasions offered unto them, have dealt not only by disputation and conference, but also by writing and printing for the suppression of this schism and reclaiming these men.⁵⁸⁸ For the persons against whom we write, though we hold them all to be in a dangerous estate (we are loath to say in a damnable estate) as long as they continue in this schism and have cause to fear that Satan's subtleties abusing the gifts that are in them and drawing them to pride and conceit of themselves has hardened some of them so in their schism that they will hardly be reclaimed, yet hope we that as many of them have been brought back again to the Church who strayed away with them, so the rest may in time be brought to a sight of their own error by good means effectual thereunto, such as God has sanctified to that end and promised to accompany with the gracious assistance of his Holy Spirit. This labor therefore of ours we trust shall not be in vain but have that work in them for their recovery by the blessing of God.

If God vouchsafe us not this favor to be happy instruments of their good, yet doubt we not but He that is witness unto our consciences how we long after their salvation, yea even from our hearts' roots, will be our strength and our judgment and our work shall be with Him ([Isa. 49:4-5](#)), though they be not gathered. But if it be remembered that our labors have been bestowed not only to raise them that are fallen already, but also to stay them that stagger and strengthen them that stand upright: though it should be utterly unprofitable unto the former sort, yet being likely to prevail with others to their benefit, it cannot but be acceptable unto God and comfortable unto ourselves, and so neither superfluous nor unnecessary.

This now only remains (Christian reader) that before we commend this treatise to God's blessing, we advertise you of two things needful for you to know:

First, whereas to many rash and hot spirited men it may seem that we have dealt in this cause too remissly, so that we have justified the corruptions of our Church, as has been objected against others heretofore: we answer that our dealing may well indeed seem too remiss while the reader shall compare it with over bitter, untrue, yea and slanderous biting and invectives of our brethren; but being compared with itself

⁵⁸⁸ For more resources on this topic see: '[On Schism & Separatism](#)' (RBO).

and with our Church, as in itself it stands, we hope it will appear (sure we are to our knowledge) we have not justified the least thing therein worthy to be condemned.

Secondly, whereas the work is somewhat long and therefore somewhat wearisome to the reader: know that we desired to be much more brief therein than we are, both for, not the reading so much as the writing of it out by them that after the reading of it may so desire, it must needs be tedious, as also for that fewer words and reasons might have as well satisfied the learned sort: but whereas our desire is to satisfy the simple, as having more need, by framing diverse answers unto the arguments and proofs which we confute and to make them plain to their capacity and understanding, we could not use more brevity without more obscurity.

And thus we commend you to God and to his blessing upon the reading hereof, that it may be a means to teach you to discern the things that differ and to keep you from your being overmuch just, lest you become too wicked. [[Eccl. 7:16-17](#)] Amen.

The Church of England is a True Church of Christ

1st Exception

The first exception [of the Separatists] is against the whole body of our assemblies and our Church in general, which they term Babylonish synagogues and a whorish, idolatrous Church: Henry Barrow in his *Discovery of the False Church*, [page 24](#).⁵⁸⁹

Answer

That the Church of England is a true Church of Christ, and such a one as from which whosoever wittingly and willingly separates himself cuts himself from Christ, we doubt not but the indifferent reader may be persuaded by these reasons following:

First, we enjoy and join together in the use of those outward means which God in his Word has ordained for the gathering of a visible Church. For proof whereof we allege:

First, that the means which we use and enjoy have been effectual to the unfeigned conversion of many, as may appear both by their fruits of faith and by the martyrdom which sundry have endured that were members of our Church and had no other means of conversion than such as we have. Yea, even those men who judge so hardly of us now are able to witness with us in this case, that if there be any true faith and sanctification in them (though it be much increased, as they think, since they left us), yet it was begun and bred in our assemblies.

Secondly, if these places of holy Scripture, [Mt. 28:20](#); [Eph. 4:11-14](#), be well examined, it will be found that the means which Christ ordained for the gathering of a visible Church are the very same which we enjoy, even the preaching of the Word and administration of the sacraments. That which Henry Barrow says against us in this point, [p. 160](#) of his *Discovery*, viz. that there is not any one thing amongst us, either in order or administration, according to Christ's Testament, shall be hereafter disproved when we shall come to justify our ministry of the Word and sacraments against their arguments or objections

⁵⁸⁹ Henry Barrow, [A Brief Discovery of the False Church](#) ([Dort?, 1590]).

whatsoever. Now that this is an infallible and good argument of a true Church appears, because:

First, there cannot be any people named that, having these means, may yet by the Word be evicted not to have been the true Church. The Papists indeed brag of these means, but without cause, for the doctrine of faith is not preached amongst them, but oppugned, and consequently they cannot have the true sacraments, which are seals of righteousness, which is by faith. [Rom. 4:11]

Secondly, the Scripture everywhere speaks of the preaching of the Word and administration of the sacraments as of privileges peculiar to the Church of God. (Ps. 147:19-20; Rom. 3:2; 9:4)

So while the Jews only were the Church, these privileges were restrained to them (Mt. 10:5-6) and never made common to the gentiles till the partition wall being broken down [Eph. 2:14], they also were incorporated to the Church of God. (Acts 11:19-23) So the prophet says that this should be the reason why the gentiles were moved to join themselves unto the true Church, because there and nowhere else the ministry of the Word was to be found. [Isa. 2:2-3; 60:1-3; Zech. 8:22-23]

Secondly, our whole Church makes profession of the true Faith: The confession of our Church together with the *Apology* thereof⁵⁹⁰ and those [39] Articles of Religion which were agreed upon in the Convocation House in the year of the Lord 1562⁵⁹¹ (whereunto every minister of the land is bound by law to subscribe, so far forth as they concern the confession of faith and the doctrine of the sacraments) do prove this evidently. For how shall we better judge of the Faith which our Church professes than by such evidence? Many Papists and atheists are in our land, we grant, and many ignorant and wicked men besides who make not so clear and so holy a profession of the true Faith as they should: but that our Church accounts any one to be her child or member who either denies Christ or professes any other way to

⁵⁹⁰ John Jewel, *The Apology of the Church of England*, tr. Anne Lady Bacon, new ed. Richard Jelf (1562; London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1849).

⁵⁹¹ "Articles of Religion" (1562) at ChurchofEngland.org

salvation than faith which works by love [[Gal. 5:6](#)],⁵⁹² or who does not profess this Faith in some measure, we confidently deny.

Now this reason also has force sufficient to prove us the true Church: for as true faith in Christ is that which gives the life and being to such as are effectually called, and so become members of the invisible and elect Church, so the profession of true Faith is that which gives life and being to a visible Church. Upon this profession we find many that have been incorporated into the visible Church and admitted to the privileges thereof, even by the apostles themselves ([Acts 8:37; 16:12, 31–32](#)); yea, and Simon Magus, though he had neither faith nor the Spirit of God, yet because he made profession of faith, he was judged a member of the visible Church and baptized. ([Acts 8:13, 18–24](#)) So the Church of Pergamos, though it did tolerate gross corruptions in it, it kept the Faith of Christ and denied not his Faith, and was still called the Church of God. ([Rev. 2:12, 15](#)) (See our further answer to this in the defense we make for our people against the second article of their third exception.)⁵⁹³

The description of a Church which they give in the [67th page](#) of their *Collection of Letters and Conferences*,⁵⁹⁴ viz. that it is a company of faithful people that truly worship Christ and readily obey Him, is utterly untrue,⁵⁹⁵ if it be understood (as needs it must) of the visible Church; for if everyone that the Church may account a visible member be truly faithful, how is our Savior to be understood when He compares the Church or ministry to a draw-net, which being cast into the sea gathers as well that which must be cast away, as good fish ([Mt. 13:47–48](#)): and to a field where the Devil does as busily sow tares as the Son of Man does good wheat? ([Mt. 13:37, 39](#)) Or how shall that difference stand which the Scripture makes betwixt the Lord's judgment and the judgment of men ([1 Sam. 16:7; Acts 13:28](#)), if men may not account any members of the Church by their outward appearance and profession unless they know them to

⁵⁹² Note that Romanists can and do affirm that the “way to salvation” is through “faith which works by love”, and that it is possible a person coming by this way may be saved. Hence the Anglican Church, and these puritan authors, accounted such persons the children and members of the visible Church of Christ in England. See ‘[On the Roman Catholic Church being a Visible Church in Some Respect](#)’ at ‘[On the Roman Church being a Church, She being Apostate, her Baptism being Valid...](#)’ (RBO).

⁵⁹³ On [pp. 277–79](#) below.

⁵⁹⁴ Henry Barrow, *A Collection of Certain Letters and Conferences Lately Passed betwixt certain Preachers and Two Prisoners in the Fleet* (1590).

⁵⁹⁵ That “The visible church... consists of all those throughout the world that profess the true religion, together with their children,” (WCF 25.2) see ‘[Local Church Membership is Not Necessary to being Part of the Visible Church](#)’ at ‘[Church Membership](#)’ (RBO) and ‘[Professing Believers & their Children, though Unbaptized, are part of the Visible Church](#)’ at ‘[The Church](#)’ (RBO).

have true faith? which thing the Lord's eye is only able to discern. [Jn. 2:23–25; Rom. 2:28–29]

Thirdly, we hold and teach and maintain against all heretics and adversaries every part and article of God's holy truth which is fundamental and such as without the knowledge and believing whereof there is no salvation. Our confessions, catechisms, Articles of Religion, published and approved of our Church, may persuade all indifferent men of this. Yet Henry Barrow was not ashamed to write in the 10th page of his *Discovery* that all the laws of God, both of the First and Second Table, are here broken and forsaken, both of the ecclesiastical and civil estate and of every particular person in both, all things being innovated in both according to the lusts and pleasures of men, the Law and Word of God being quite rejected and cast aside. And in the 212th page of their *Refutation of Master Gifford*,⁵⁹⁶ they have these words:

“We hold that you have poisoned all the fountains of sincere doctrine and perverted the whole Testament, and turned away the practice thereof by your damnable false expositions: Yea, that you teach not one point sincerely.”

And in the 162nd page of this *Discovery*:

“They are made so contrary one to another as it is an impossible thing to find two of them in one mind, yea, or any one of them constant, in that he affirms they know not the doctrine even of the beginning of Christ.”

Add hereto Henry Barrow's words: 12th and 23rd pages of their *Collections of Letters and Conference*.

We will not give any answer to these speeches, but only desire the Christian reader to consider: whether ever God's Spirit taught any to write so slanderously, not only against a whole nation (the conversion whereof they pretend to seek), but against the blessed truth of God; and how unlikely it is that they should be in the right way whose chief leaders were guided by such a spirit, that they should be the Lord's building whose first founders and master-builders had either so small skill or so bad

⁵⁹⁶ Henry Barrow, *A Plain Refutation of Mr. G. Gifford's Reproachful Book, entitled, A Short Treatise against the Donatists of England...* (1591). George Gifford (c. 1548–1600 or 1620?) was a non-conformist, English, puritan preacher at Maldon in Essex, England. Here is his book Barrow was responding to: Gifford, *A Short Treatise Against the Donatists of England, whom we call Brownists...* (London, 1590). Gifford replied to Barrow in *A Short Reply unto the Last Printed Books of Henry Barrow & John Greenwood, the Chief Ringleaders of our Donatists in England...* (London, 1591).

a conscience? Do we not hold all the same books of canonical Scriptures which they themselves do? Do we not reject out of the canon all which themselves account apocryphal? Have they any translation of holy Scripture besides ours? Do they themselves believe or teach otherwise in the articles of the holy Trinity, of justification, of predestination, than we do? Has every member of their assemblies recovered that Spirit of truth whereby they are led into all truth, as Henry Barrow, [page 107](#) of his *Discovery*, affirms? And is there not anyone amongst us that has not quite rejected the whole Word of God? Not anyone that knows the doctrine even of the beginning of Christ? We know no better way to convince them in this than by appealing unto their consciences, which we are sure will take our parts against them.

Now this reason also is strong to prove us a true Church, for although the bare letter of the Scripture may be found amongst the Jews and Papists and other heretics, yet was there never any people that held and maintained the true sense of the Scripture in all points fundamental but only the Church of God, whereunto only this title belongs, to be the pillar and ground of truth: [1 Tim. 3:15](#). Wherein we desire the reader to consider that a people may be the true Church though they know not, nor hold not every truth contained in the holy Scriptures, but contrarily hold many errors repugnant to the Scriptures. Yet has Henry Barrow affirmed in the [167th page](#) of his *Discovery* that to the people of God, and every one of them, God has given his holy sanctifying Spirit to open unto them and lead them unto all truth, whereby it is most evident that he would have none to be accounted the people and Church of God who either know not, or practice not every truth contained in the holy Scriptures. In which opinion see, I pray you, how gross and dangerous errors are contained:

First, that to every inferior member in the Church there is as much revealed as to the pastors and chief members, whereas the apostle affirms that the Holy Ghost is given to every member of the body of Christ not equally, but proportionably, as the place which it occupies in the body does require. ([Rom. 12:3](#); [Eph. 4:16](#); [2:19](#))

Secondly, that the promise mentioned, [Jn. 16:13](#), should be made to every member of the Church: which in the last words of the verse, appears plainly to be particular to the apostles.

Thirdly, that the Church cannot err, and so neither were the Corinthians rightly called the Church of God when they judged corruptly of fornication and of the Resurrection [1 Cor. 5:1-2; 15:12], neither they of Pergamos when the doctrine of Balaam was maintained among them [Rev. 2:14], neither were Paul and the rest of the apostles true members of the Church, who (though in the exercises of their apostolical function they could not err) yet knew but in part (1 Cor. 13:9) and in many things were subject to error.

Another strange opinion is amongst them maintained in the 156th-157th pages of the *Discovery*, viz. that every truth contained in the Scripture is fundamental.⁵⁹⁷

For although we affirm not (as he there slanders us) that some part of Scripture is more holy, more authentical or more true than other parts, yet doubt we not to say that some parts are of more use and more necessary for men to know than some others. Else, why does the Holy Ghost oft give special commendation to some parts more than to others? (1 Tim. 4:11; Tit. 3:8; Mal. 4:4) Why does He as it were make proclamation and solemn oyeses [special cries] before some [e.g. Dt. 6:3-4; Josh. 22:5; Prov. 8:1-4; Isa. 55:1; Mt. 5:18; 23:14-16, etc.] and not before others? Why does He use a special art in some parts [Dt. 32:1-44; Prov. 9:1-5; Isa. 5:1-7; 1 Cor. 1:18-31; 15:35-58, etc.] rather than in others? And although we do not hold (as they falsely charge us in the forenamed page of their *Discovery*) that some parts of holy Scripture are of small moment, superficial, needless and of no necessity, such as may be altered and violated without any prejudice or danger at all to the soul, and much less that a man that has obstinately continued in the transgression of some parts and openly taught the same unto others may be undoubtedly saved though he die without repentance: but on the contrary we believe and teach that there is no part of holy Scripture which every Christian is not necessarily bound to seek and desire the knowledge of, so far forth as in him lies: yet dare we not call every truth fundamental, that is, such as if it be not obeyed and known, the whole religion and faith of the Church must needs fall to the ground. For we do make no question but that the thief that was crucified and the eunuch even then when he was baptized by Philip were in the state of

⁵⁹⁷ Gifford also testified that this was their belief: "Your third error is in denying the distinction of errors fundamental and not fundamental, where ye call it a papistical distinction..." ?" *Short Reply*, p. 16. For reformed literature, see: '*Of Fundamental, Secondary & Tertiary Matters of Christianity...*' (RBO).

salvation though they could not choose but be ignorant of many truths in religion.

The only fundamental truth in religion is this, that Jesus Christ the Son of God, who took our nature of the virgin Mary, is our only and all-sufficient savior.⁵⁹⁸
For:

First, they that receive this truth are the people of God and in the state of salvation ([Mt. 16:17](#); [Col. 3:17](#); [Jn. 20:31](#); [Eph. 2:20](#)); they that receive it not cannot possibly be saved. [[1 Cor. 12:3](#); [1 Jn. 4:3](#)]

Secondly, there is no other point of Christian religion necessary otherwise than as it tends necessarily to the bringing us unto or confirming us in the assurance of this one truth ([Heb. 13:8](#); [1 Cor. 2:2](#)); and therefore when the apostle says that the Church is built upon the foundation of the prophets and apostles ([Eph. 2:19–22](#)), his meaning is not to call everything contained in their writings the foundation of the Church, but that this foundation we have spoken of is there to be found and has witnesses from thence, and that all the writings and doctrines of the apostles and prophets do bend unto, stay and rest upon this one truth as the walls in the building upon the chief cornerstone.

Lastly, all the known Churches in the world acknowledge our Church for their sister and give unto us the right-hand of fellowship. This Henry Barrow and John Greenwood deny in their [14th page](#) of their *Refutation*, but they name not any one

⁵⁹⁸ Rutherford: "[1 Cor. 3:11](#), 'Another foundation can no man lay, than that which is laid, Jesus Christ.' Hence Jesus Christ is the foundation of faith real or personal, and the knowledge of Christ is the dogmatical foundation of faith..." *Due Right*, pt. 1, [ch. 4, §5](#), p. 221.

Johann H. Heidegger: "XX... the foundation of faith is Christ, as the apostle testifies in express words in [1 Cor. 3:11](#), saying: 'For no one can lay another foundation than that which has been laid, which is Jesus Christ.'..."

XXII. But since Christ, the one foundation and rock of our salvation, as the apostle and high priest of our confession ([Heb 3:1](#)), does not save unless believed with true faith and received, nor can He even be believed without knowledge and assent to some truth or axiom concerning Christ...

XXIII... this fundamental axiom or truth consists in this, that Christ, as the mental image of God, defined by God as the Sponsor and Savior of the world, is the righteousness of all those who have communion with him through faith." "Dissertation on the Foundation of Salvation, in which the Universal Theme concerning Fundamental & Non-Fundamental Articles & Errors is Disputed" (1676) in [Various Disputations](#), tr. by AI by Onku (n.p., n.d.), p. 269; Heidegger, *Dissertatio de fundamento salutis. Qua universum de articulis et erroribus fundamentalibus et non-fundamentalibus thema discutitur* (Zurich: David Gessber, 1676), [§§20–23](#).

Church that makes question of us, whether we were the true Church or no: never yet was there any reformed Church that made that question. They are well acquainted with our Church by the report of them that have travelled from hence and sundry other ways with our doctrine and Liturgy, our lacks and corruptions, every one. Neither do they only forbear to show their dislike to us or are content to preserve society with us, which haply through human infirmity they might do upon sinister respects if they approved not of us in judgment, but they do also hold and teach that what people soever has so much as we, is the true Church, though the lacks and corruptions are as great as ours are.

Now when we allege for ourselves the testimonies of the Churches, we do not thereby (as these men fondly conclude in the 14th page of their *Refutation*) make the word of men the foundation of our Church. Nor do we use these as our only and chief defense, whereby we seek to approve ourselves either unto the Lord or to the consciences of his people; but such an argument we take this to be, as in its due place has much force in it and as God Himself has sanctified for a principal help in deciding of controversies in this kind:

The apostles used to allege it as a matter of comfort to them whom they write unto that the Churches of Christ salute them ([Rom. 16:16](#); [1 Pet. 5:13](#)), that they were famous and had the good report of the Churches ([Rom. 16:19](#); [2 Cor. 8:18–19](#), [23–24](#); [Gal. 1:2](#)). Saint Paul, though he received not his calling either from men, or by men [[Gal. 1:11–12](#)], nor was any whit inferior to the chief apostles ([2 Cor. 11:5](#); [12:11](#)), yet does he allege for the credit of his ministry that the chiefest apostles approved him and gave to him the right-hand of fellowship. ([Gal. 2:9](#)) Yea, he sought also their approbation and feared that without it he should have run in vain. ([Gal. 2:2](#)) And which is yet more, he seeks to win commendation and credit even to those which he by his apostolical authority might have established by the example and judgment of other churches: If those Churches which were planted by the apostles themselves might take comfort in the good opinion that other Churches had of them, may not we much more? If the ministry of Paul and orders he prescribed to the Church received further credit by the approbation of the Churches, then their approbations give some credit to the ministry and orders of the Church now.

The doctrine and Word of God, though to speak properly it received authority only from itself and the Spirit of God, yet has it ever been the rather received by men for the testimony the Church has given unto it. So our Savior Christ says that "Wisdom is justified of her children" ([Mt. 11:19](#)); and although He affirms that He received not the record of men, yet in respect of the salvation and good of men ([Jn. 5:34](#)), He judges it necessary that John the Baptist should give testimony unto Him. ([Jn. 1:7-8](#); [5:33-34](#)) Now if this one thing furthered the damnation of the unbelieving Jews, that they would not hear nor receive Christ, though testimony were given of Him by one whom they knew to be sent of God [[Mt. 21:23-27](#)]: shall not this further the condemnation of these men that they refuse to hear and receive us though we be commended unto them by the testimony of so many Churches of God?

Some cases there be wherein we are commanded to seek for the judgment of the Churches and to account it the judgment of God, else why did the Church at Antioch, in a question that could not be debated at home, seek to the Church at Jerusalem for help, especially seeing they had two such excellent men with them as Paul and Barnabas, whose judgments they might safely have trusted unto ([Acts 15:2](#)): says our Savior that whatsoever they bind on earth, shall be bound also in heaven ([Mt. 18:18](#)); and says He not this also to Churches of other nations? Shall he be accounted as a heathen or a publican that will not regard the judgment and censure of the particular congregation whereof he is a member ([Mt. 18:17](#)), and shall they not be much more accounted so that despise the judgment of all the Churches? Must the spirits of the prophets be subject to the prophets amongst whom we live ([1 Cor. 14:32](#)), and must not both people and prophets be subject to all the prophets and Churches in the world?

The ability to try and discern the spirits and doctrines of such teachers as arise in the Church is such a gift as the true Church never lacked ([1 Jn. 4:1](#); [Rev. 2:2](#)); neither could it be the pillar and ground of truth ([1 Tim. 3:15](#)) if it should be ignorant of a truth so necessary to the salvation of men as this is, viz. What people is accounted to be the true Church of God? If God has given his Church power to judge and pronounce a

particular man that he is in the state of salvation, and that so infallibly⁵⁹⁹ that He has promised to ratify in heaven the judgment which the Church shall in this case give upon earth (Mt. 18:18), may it not be said that He has much more made the Church able to discern and pronounce of a congregation or people that is a true visible Church (which is a matter of no such difficulty as the other)?

So that to conclude, though those men make so light of the judgment and testimony of other Churches, as if the Word of God had come out from them only (1 Cor. 14:36) or as if themselves were able to judge of us better than all the godly learned besides, yet do we take much comfort and assurance from hence that we are the true Church of God. Now it remains that we answer such reasons as are objected against our Church by them.

Objection 1

The first thing that they object against our Church and our parish assemblies is this: that it was not rightly gathered by such means as God in his Word has ordained and sanctified for the gathering of his Church. For, says Henry Barrow in the 10th page of his *Discovery*, all the people were in one day with the blast of Queen Elizabeth's trumpet, of ignorant persons and gross idolaters [Romanists], made faithful Christians and true prophets. And in the third page of that "Epistle to the Reader," which they have prefixed to their *Refutation of Master Gifford*, they have these words: where such profane multitudes were immediately changed from public idolaters and on an instant received, or rather compelled to be members of this Church, in some parish or other:

"without any due calling to the Faith by the preaching of the Gospel going before or orderly joining together in the Faith, there being no voluntary or particular confession of their own faith and duties made, nor required of any. Who can say that those churches were ever rightly gathered or built according to the rule of Christ's Testament?"

⁵⁹⁹ The authors do not here say the Church is infallible, but, allowing room that it can err, yet say it can in some instances judge "a particular man that he is in the state of salvation," and that "so infallibly that..." This limited infallibleness, or what is close to it, need not stem from any special revelation, but likely from sense experience (which some persons in the era held to be infallible in its right use) and spiritual discernment by the illumination of the Spirit, conjoined by syllogism with premises from God's Word and necessary deduction.

Answer 1

To all that they thus object against our first gathering, this answer we give: First, that we might be counted a true Church though it could not appear that we were at the first rightly gathered:

For even as the disciples might be well assured of Christ's bodily presence when they saw and felt Him though they could not perceive which way or how He could possibly come in [[Lk. 24:36-37](#); [Jn. 20:19-20, 26-27](#)], so may we esteem them a true Church of whose present profession and Faith we are well assured, though we cannot see by what means they were first gathered, else we may still doubt whether Melchizedek [[Gen. 14:18-20](#)] and the families of Job [[Job 1:1-5](#)] were true churches and members of the Church, because how they were first gathered and made a Church, or of whom, we know not; and yet we are now certainly persuaded that they are a Church. Nay, we find good warrant in the Word to the contrary, for we read of many who, having by that which they heard and saw, perceived evidently that a people were the Church of God, did join themselves willingly unto them without enquiring how they were gathered or converted, as Abraham to Melchizedek [[Gen. 14:18-20](#)], Rahab to Israel [[Josh. 2](#)], the eunuch to Philip [[Acts 8:31-38](#)], the gaoler [jailer] to Paul and Silas [[Acts 16:27-34](#)].

Secondly, we might be rightly gathered to the society and fellowship of the visible Church by other means than by the preaching of the Gospel. For proof whereof we allege their own judgment and opinion (which howsoever it be, yet it has force enough to stop their mouths), namely, that men may be won to the true faith of Christ not extraordinarily, but even ordinarily, also by other means than the public and ministerial preaching of the Word. For if several members may be converted without this means, may not they much rather without it be gathered together and made an assembly?

Secondly, admit there were no other means whereby a man could be soundly converted but only preaching: Yet it is evident that by some other means men may be lawfully

brought to an outward profession and so made a visible Church.⁶⁰⁰ Many in the days of Christ were prepared to hear and believe and did also follow Him and profess themselves his disciples that no man could without sin have denied them to be members of the visible Church, who yet were not all drawn by his Word but some by his miracles (Jn. 2:23–24), some by the report they heard of Him (Jn. 4:39), some by desire they had to be [physically] fed by Him (Jn. 6:24–26). Some kings became nursing fathers and queens nursing mothers to the Church [Isa. 49:23]:⁶⁰¹ their laws have been means to bring men to the outward society of the Church. [2 Chron. 36:23; Ezra 1:1–4; Esth. 8:17; Isa. 60:10–12; Dan. 3:28–29; 6:25–27] And the practice of Josiah proves that men may be compelled by the magistrate to serve the Lord.⁶⁰² (2 Chron. 34:32–33) Now as many hearing of the fame of John the Baptist and of Christ came unto them and so were converted by their preaching, so many that for fear of the law were first brought to the Church and outward profession of the truth, have been and are effectually converted by the ministry of the Word.

Thirdly, our Church was gathered by the preaching of the Word, for the first conversion of the faithful of our land was by the preaching of the Gospel, as is manifested by the testimonies of the best approved histories. Since that time many have been from age to age called by the same means, as by the ministry of Master John Wycliffe and such like; for proof whereof this may serve that in most of the kings' days there have been some which have endured martyrdom for the truth. These secret ones did gather others secretly so long as persecution continued and showed themselves openly when liberty

⁶⁰⁰ That an outward profession makes one a part of the visible Church, see 'Professing Believers & their Children, though Unbaptized, are part of the Visible Church' at 'The Church' (RBO) and 'Local Church Membership is Not Necessary to being Part of the Visible Church' at 'Church Membership' (RBO).

⁶⁰¹ On the topic throughout this treatise of magistrates' supportive relationship to the Church, in that they have power around sacred things (*circa sacra*), though not in sacred things (*in sacra*), see Fentiman, *Circa Sacra*.

⁶⁰² This needs to be qualified. While unbelievers may be forced to desist from breaking God's moral law, such as from external false worship under the 2nd Commandment, yet see: 'Unbelievers are Not to be Compelled to Christianity' at 'The Civil Magistrate's Authority around Spiritual Things (Circa Sacra)' (RBO). Christians, however, may be civilly held by the magistrate (as in the case of Josiah) to their profession of Christianity and baptism into the Covenant of Grace, just as the magistrate may civilly hold any citizen to their sworn covenants or vows. Hence the magistrate may negatively compel professed Christians to the means and external acts of worship they are obliged unto (without regard to internal sincerity or hypocrisy). See Fentiman, III. "The State's Authority Circa Sacra Towards Non-Christians" and V. "The State's Authority Circa Sacra in an Established Christian Nation" in *Circa Sacra*, pp. 34–43 & 53–76, and 'Whether the Magistrate has the Power to Compel to a Church Profession?' at 'On Toleration & Pretended Liberty of Conscience' (RBO). The immediate context of the authors of this *Refutation* was in England, which was a civilly established Christian nation.

was granted. In the days of [King Edward](#) [VI, 1547–1553] great numbers were by preaching so effectually called that in [Queen \[Bloody\] Mary's](#) reign [1553–1558] many simple men and women were able to maintain the truth against the most learned Papists and to seal it with their blood. Besides them there were many secret congregations in many parts of the land all the days of Queen Mary which gladly received and openly professed the Gospel offered unto them by public authority at her Majesty's [[Queen Elizabeth's](#)] entrance to the crown [in 1558].

If it be said that they ceased to be the true Churches of Christ because they joined themselves and became one body with such as were newly come from [Roman] idolatry (and that not of conscience, but for fear only), we answer that they rather that were fallen from the Gospel in Queen Mary's days were moved by Queen Elizabeth's proclamation to join themselves unto them that had stood faithful all that while.

Neither is it truly said of them that in one day by the blast of her Majesty's trumpet at the beginning of her reign all sorts of men were drawn to a profession of the Gospel without any further means used, for before any were compelled to the profession of the Gospel, which was not till midsummer after her Majesty came to the crown, there were not only many commissioners sent unto all the parts of the land that they might deface all the monuments of idolatry, but sundry preachers also (which in the days of Queen Mary had received approbation and exercised their ministry in some of the best reformed Churches beyond the seas) did by their doctrine both keep them whom they found converted in the profession of the truth and called many others, of which number we may reckon Master John Knox, [Leave](#),⁶⁰³ [Anthony Gilby](#), [Thomas Sampson](#), [William Whittingham](#), [Christopher Goodman](#) and sundry others; and there were daily added to the Church by no other means than by the ministry of the Word preached. So that if this [objection] were a good reason against [union with] other particular members or whole families, yet it cannot justify a separation from all, seeing we have many that by the preaching of the Word of God were converted and gathered.

Fourthly, this being proved that there was a true Church in the land before her Majesty's reign, the question must not be whether the means she used were the right means for the calling and converting a people to the faith, but whether she took a lawful course for recalling and reuniting of her subjects unto those true professors whose fellowship they

⁶⁰³ Possibly [Thomas Lever](#) (1521–1577) or [John a Lasco](#) (1499–1560).

had forsaken. This was the course which Jehoshaphat took, who, to gather the Church (which was divided), sent preachers into sundry parts of his kingdom and appointed noble men to accompany and assist them by countenancing their ministry and compelling the people to hear them (2 Chron. 17:8–9).⁶⁰⁴ This course also did Josiah take, who having abolished idolatry, compelled all his subjects to the service of the true God (2 Chron. 34:7, 33). Thus did Asa use his authority in commanding Judah to seek the Lord and to do according to the Law and commandment, and threatening them with death that should refuse (2 Chron. 14:4; 15:13). So did Hezekiah by his proclamation bring diverse of Israel to Jerusalem who were before separated from the Church of God (2 Chron. 30:12).

Fifthly, whereas they say that at the beginning of her Majesty's reign the people should have been required with solemn oath and covenant to renounce idolatry and to profess faith and true obedience to the Gospel after the example of Asa's reformation, we answer:

First, if it had been absolutely necessary to the being of a Church that there should be such a solemn covenant by oath⁶⁰⁵ to renounce idolatry:

Firstly, this course should have been taken in that reformation which Jehoshaphat [1 Kn. 22:41–43; 2 Chron. 17:1–12] and Josiah made [2 Chron. 34:29–33], as well as that which Asa made [2 Chron. 15:8–16].

Secondly, even where this oath was taken, it was God's true Church before the time of that oath and covenant made by Asa: we read it was made and taken in the 15th year of his reign [2 Chron. 15:10], when yet his subjects were the true Church long before [2 Chron. 15:1–9].

Secondly, there be diverse congregations in our land which in the beginning of her Majesty's days and since have publicly professed their repentance for their former idolatry and promised to embrace and obey the truth as it is presently established, as in Coventry, Northampton and some other places. Yea, we doubt not to affirm that the whole land, in the parliament holden in the first year of her Majesty's reign [in

⁶⁰⁴ See Fentiman, "The Magistrate may Compel to the Hearing of the Gospel" in *Circa Sacra*, pp. 37–43 and 'Whether the Magistrate has the Power to Compel to a Church Profession?' (RBO).

⁶⁰⁵ The necessity of contracting by way of a human-made particular church covenant, whether for the being or proper establishing of a church or its membership, was characteristic of congregationalism (which the Separatists leaned towards) in contrast to presbyterianism. See 'A Local or Particular Church Covenant is Not Necessary for Church Membership' at 'Church Membership' (RBO).

1559], did enter into a solemn covenant with the Lord for the renouncing of Popery and receiving the gospel.

Objection 2

The second thing they object against the whole body of our assemblies is this: That they communicate together in a false and idolatrous worship of God which is polluted with the writings of men, viz. with (1) read stinted prayers, (2) catechisms, (3) read homilies and such like, which in the 24th page of their *Refutation* they call “the smoke of the bottomless pit” [Rev. 9:2].

Answer 2

To this objection we give this answer:

First, that it is evident by the Word that the Church has used and might use lawfully in God's worship and prayer a stinted form of words:⁶⁰⁶ for we find a form of blessing the people prescribed to the priests (Num. 6:23–24), a form of confession prescribed to the people to be used at the bringing of the firstfruits to the Temple (Dt. 26:13, 15), a psalm appointed for the priests and Levites to use every morning,⁶⁰⁷ another to be used every Sabbath Day (Ps. 92). So in the thanksgiving used at the bringing home of the ark unto the place prepared for it by David, the Church tied themselves to the very words of the 105th and 96th psalms (1 Chron. 16:8, 36); and as one evangelist reports, our Savior appointed that prayer which He gave to His disciples to be a pattern to frame all other prayers by (Mt. 6:9). So the other evangelist reports that He had them when they prayed, say, “Our Father, etc.” (Lk. 11:2) which He would never have done if it had not been lawful for us in making those petitions to God to use those very words which are there prescribed.

⁶⁰⁶ For reformed literature on the issue of forms of prayer, see ‘On the Use of Forms of Prayer’ (RBO).

⁶⁰⁷ No psalm superscription mentions the morning, but the authors may have in mind psalms that speak of praying and praising in the morning, which psalms might naturally have been used in the morning, such as: Ps. 5:3; 59:16; 88:13; 119:147; 143:8.

Now to that, they object against this that we never read that the apostles did use this prescript form of words in prayer. We answer:⁶⁰⁸

That it is absurd to prove negatively from examples of men against that which God in His Word so expressly either commanded or permitted. For we may as well reason thus: That we do not read that the apostles or the Church in their time did baptize infants; therefore they were not then baptized. Or thus: We do not read that the apostles did pray either before or after they preached; therefore they did not. Or thus: Saint Paul did not marry [1 Cor. 7:7-8],⁶⁰⁹ nor take [monetary] maintenance from the Corinthians [1 Cor. 9:14-15; 2 Cor. 11:7-9]; therefore he might not have done it lawfully.

The most psalms that David made, as they were committed to the Church musicians, which in singing them were tied to the very words that David set down, so they were not sung as meditations and doctrines for the instruction of the Church, but as prayers unto God. This is evident not only by the manifold petitions and thanksgivings unto God that are to be found in them, but by this especially, that they are said to be sung unto the Lord [Ps. 3:3, 7; 5:1, etc.].

As by that which has been said, it may appear that set and prescript forms are lawful in those prayers and thanksgivings that are used upon ordinary occasions, so it is also evident that they may be lawfully used even in those prayers and thanksgivings that, being taken up on extraordinary occasions, do require an extraordinary and special fervency of the spirit: for which we have the example of our Savior Christ Himself who used the very same words three times severally even in that prayer which He made with all holy excess of fervent affection (Mt. 26:42, 44).

And this may lawfully be done, not only in those forms which we frame and devise ourselves, but in them also which we find to have been used by the good servants of God in former times upon the like occasions to those that befall us now. (2 Chron. 5:13; Ps. 136:1; 2 Chron. 20:21; 2 Chron. 29:30) So Solomon uses

⁶⁰⁸ On the general topic see 'On the Use of Forms of Prayer, Stinted Forms of Prayer, & their Necessity, versus Free-Prayer' at 'Prayer' (RBO).

⁶⁰⁹ It is only known that Paul was not married at the time he wrote 1 Corinthians. Being a Pharisee of the Pharisees (Acts 22:3; 23:6; 26:4-5; Gal. 1:13-14; Phil. 3:4-6), he may likely have been married before that: Alfred Edersheim, *Sketches of Jewish Social Life in the Day of Christ* (NY: Hodder & Stoughton, 1876?), p. 147.

in the dedication of the Temple that very psalm which David vowed to use [Ps. 132:2] at the bringing of the ark to his house (2 Chron. 6:41–42; Ps. 132:8, 10); and in the bringing of the Tabernacle and holy vessels into the House of God, he uses the same words of another psalm [1 Chron. 16:7–22; Ps. 105:1–15; 1 Chron. 16:23–33; Ps. 96; 1 Chron. 16:34–36; Ps. 106:47–48]. So Jehoshaphat uses the same words of the same psalm in that excellent thanksgiving which he makes to God [2 Chron. 20:21; Ps. 136:1]. Hezekiah caused thanks to be given in the same words unto God as David and Asaph had used before [2 Chron. 29:30]. Yea, this manner of praying and praising in set and prescript forms of words even upon extraordinary occasions we find directly commanded sundry times [Ex. 15:1–21; Dt. 27:11–26; Ezra 3:10–11; Neh. 8:6; Isa. 6:3; 38:9–22]: So the prophets expressly set forth what words should be used among the people [Isa. 12:1–2, 4; Hos. 8:2; 1 Cor. 14:26].

And which is yet more, we find a set and prescript form of words to be used in extraordinary occasions appointed long before those occasions fell out (Hos. 14:2–3; Joel 2:13). So we read of a form of thanksgiving appointed to be used by the Church at Christ's coming [Ps. 118:26; Mt. 21:9; 23:39], and Solomon prescribes a form of confession to be used by the Church in captivity (1 Kings 8:47), which form Daniel, in the name of the Church, used (Dan. 9:5). So Jeremiah appoints the 136th psalm to be used by the people for a form of thanksgiving after their return from captivity (Jer. 33:11), which was also used accordingly by them (Ezra 3:11). Whereupon this will follow, that unless they can take exception to the matter of our prayers (which shall afterwards be considered of), they may not blame us for the stinted and prescript form of prayers we use; and that if we lack fervency of spirit in our prayers, the fault is to be imputed to the corruption of our own hearts and not to the prescript forms we use.

2. Concerning the catechisms used in our Church,⁶¹⁰ we answer:

First, it is evident by the Scripture that the Church has for the instruction of the people not only taught and delivered the holy Scriptures themselves and tied themselves in their teaching to the very words and frame thereof, but has also

⁶¹⁰ On the lawfulness and usefulness of confessions and catechisms, see 'On Creeds & Confessions' (RBO) and 'On Catechizing' (RBO).

ever had and used to teach abridgments, sums of their principles of religion collected out of the Scriptures; and this we think will be evident to such as in the fear of God and desire to know the truth shall well weigh and consider these places: [Rom. 2:20](#); [6:17](#); [2 Tim. 1:13](#); [Heb. 5:12–14](#); [6:1–2](#).

And as the Scripture proves this warrantable, so reason itself and common experience teaches that it is a great help in all knowledge to have short sums of that which we would learn represented to us in our view and prospect, and to have that in order taught that we would be instructed in. So is the sailor helped by his card, the traveler by his map and the most cunning workman by his pattern he draws before he begins his work. So he that teaches children begins with the letters and he that builds a house, with the foundation.

Secondly, it is also evident that in teaching these principles (as well as in the other kind of instructions), Christ and his holy apostles have been wont to require of their hearers that they should resound and give account of the principles of religion thus taught in order, as appears by the notation of the Greek word, *κατηχέω*, which is used in all these places, [Lk. 14](#); [Acts 18:25](#); [1 Cor. 14:19](#); [Gal. 6:6](#): as also by the practice of the Jewish Church which our Savior by his presence approved ([Lk. 2:46–47](#)), and by his own practice also ([Mt. 13:36, 51](#); [Mk. 9:28, 30–31](#)), and which (following his example) some of the apostles did [[Rom. 6:17](#); [2 Tim. 1:13](#); [2:2](#)].

Thirdly, if ministers may (as we have proved), in regard of the particular state of their people, collect such abridgments and require the people to resound them, then it cannot be unlawful for the people to resound the doctrine in the self-same words wherein it was taught.

Fourthly, this being so, it cannot but be lawful and profitable for the people to have the catechisms and sums delivered them in writing or in print that they may the better read and learn them.

Seeing we may have forms both of prayers and catechisms, we see not how this can condemn the forms which we use, viz. that in compiling and collecting them, the invention and such other gifts of men are used, seeing there is a liberty left to the Church to do many things that tend only to the setting forth of God's ordinances (as they themselves confess), and [seeing that] in the preaching of the Word and in those

prayers which they call “conceived prayers” [extemporaneous prayers]: the wit, memory, judgment and such other human gifts are lawfully and necessarily used, especially considering that the people's understanding and memory may be the better helped by being well acquainted with those forms [than] by the other.

If we may use lawfully (as we see we may) even such forms as were collected by men, and that these forms do not any way stain or prejudice the fervency of the spirit, then doubt we not but these forms that have been set down by men of better gifts may as lawfully be used of them who thoroughly conceive the meaning and truth of them, as those which the minister devises himself.

If forms thus devised by men be found to be lawful and profitable, what sin can it be for the governors of the Church to command that such forms be used, or for us that are persuaded of the lawfulness of them being imposed [to so use them], unless they will say that therefore it is unlawful for us to hear the Word, receive the sacraments, believe the Trinity and all other articles of the Faith, because we are commanded by the magistrates so to do:⁶¹¹ whereas indeed we ought the rather to do good things that are agreeable unto the Word when we know them to be also commanded by the Christian magistrate.

Though we are persuaded by the former reason to think that stinted forms are so far from being simply unlawful, as in that, in the ordinary and general occasions of the whole Church, they are many times more fit than those that are called “conceived

⁶¹¹ Note it is not the proper scope of the magistrate to command religious beliefs as such, but, as has been delineated in [footnote 601](#), the magistrate may and ought to civilly hold persons to their vows and covenants, such as professing Christians to their baptismal covenant. Rutherford: “The magistrate cannot compel men to believe, but as [Francis] Junius says (*Controversy 1 Contra Bellarmine [of the Word of God Written & Not Written]*, bk. 3, ch. 6 [in *Operum Theologicorum* (Geneva, 1607), vol. 2, [cols. 490-93](#)]), he may compel [professed Christian] men to profess belief, but not to believe; he may compel to the external means, not to the end.” *Peaceable & Temperate Plea*, [ch. 9](#), p. 111. Rutherford: “1. The magistrate may compel to the means and external acts of worship... he cannot compel to internal acts of faith, love, and such like, as having no power over the conscience. 2. There is one consideration of a heathen or pagan nation which never received Christianity, and the true faith, and another consideration of a nation baptized and professing Christ. 3. A magistrate may compel a heathen nation to the negative reverence of Christ in an indirect way, and that with the sword, though he cannot compel to the positive worshipping of Him: if a Christian prince subdue a pagan nation, he cannot force them with the sword to a positive receiving of the doctrine of the Gospel, but if it be a nation expressly blaspheming Christ, as the nation of the Jews now do, he may compel them to an abstinence from a professed blaspheming of Christ, because he is to use the sword against blasphemy. 4. The weapons of the Church as the Church are not carnal, but spiritual and mighty through God. 5. The compelling power of the magistrate is terminated upon external worship as abstracted from either hypocrisy or sincerity in worship.” *Due Right*, pt. 2, [ch. 6](#), p. 352.

prayers.” Yet it is well known that our law allows, and our preachers also do use conceived prayers, which we in some cases do judge more fit to stir up and express the groans and sighs of the spirit than those prayers do wherein we tie ourselves to prescript words.

But why do we seek to justify our prescript Liturgy before these men who speak as scornfully and profanely of our conceived prayers as they can possibly do of those which we read? For when Henry Barrow had derided and flouted those that use only read prayers, he breaks out into these speeches, in the 37th page of his *Discovery*, that other smooth hypocrites, yet as gross idolaters, use this, viz. the Lord's Prayer, as a clause or supply to their long and prolix prayers conceived before. Whereby it should seem that their hatred to us (rather than to our corruptions) is so great as that whatsoever we do will displease them. [Mt. 11:17-19]

3. Concerning homilies, this answer we give: That though we think it is not simply unlawful to read in our assemblies such homilies as are for the matter sound and good:⁶¹² yet in regard of the dangerous inconveniences that may come by using them by so many ministers and congregations in the land, we do utterly dislike all public use of them, so that we wonder that these men are not ashamed to use this as a reason of their separation from the whole Church.

But what if all this were granted, that the use of our stinted prayers, catechisms and homilies were idolatrous (which yet we have proved to be otherwise), will it from thence follow that we are not that true Church? Is this a greater corruption in the worship of God than the retaining of high places, against which there is so express a commandment (Dt. 12:2; 1 Kn. 11:8-9; 2 Kn. 13:6), or than the burning of incense to the brazen serpent? (2 Kn. 18:4) And yet it is evident that the one of these was retained in the days of Asa (1 Kn. 15:14) and Azariah (2 Kn. 15:4) kings of Judah, and the other even till Hezekiah's reign (2 Kn. 18:1-4): in which time notwithstanding it is manifest there was a true Church in Judah.

The testimony of Scripture which they quote in page 68 of the *Collection of Letters and Conferences* and in the 144th page of their *Refutation* against our prescript Liturgy, are (1) such as either tend generally to the condemning of idolatry (Dt. 5:8-9) or (2) such as

⁶¹² See 'On Persons Reading Sermons from the Pulpit when there is No Minister' at 'Preaching' (RBO).

forbid us to add anything to the Word of God (Dt. 4:2; 1 Chron. 28:10; Mt. 15:9; Col. 2:20, 23; Rev. 22:18–19).

First:

To the first sort we answer first, that they have not yet proved our Liturgy idolatry. Secondly, if they had, yet cannot they by these testimonies conclude that therefore they that use it are not the true Church.⁶¹³

To the other sort of testimonies, this we say: That we add not our Liturgy unto the Word of God, nor make it of equal authority with it: neither do we use it to the same ends and purposes that we do the Scripture.⁶¹⁴

Secondly, we do wonder with what judgment or conscience they can blame us for adding to the Word by our Liturgy, who will at no hand allow us to use as prayers any of the forms that are set down in the Scripture.

The reasons also against all forms of liturgy are fond [foolish] and weak, though they seem to collect them from the Scriptures, for:

First, we have above proved that God may be worshipped spiritually and fervently even in that prayer wherein a set and prescript form of words are used.

Secondly, that this is no good reason: The apostles are not read to have used any set form of prayer themselves or to have prescribed any to the Churches; therefore they did not use or prescribe any, or therefore the Church might not.

Thirdly, we see not why, if they reason that the Spirit helps our infirmities, etc. (Rom. 8:26) and we have received that anointing (1 Jn. 2:27), therefore we need not, nor may not use (Jn. 4:23; 1 Cor. 3:11–12) any prescript forms of words as helps in our prayers, they may not as strongly reason that the Spirit helps our infirmities and we have received that anointing, therefore we need not, nor may not use any outward helps for our consolation and instruction or for the subduing of our corruptions [which is absurd].

⁶¹³ See pp. 238–39 below.

⁶¹⁴ See 'On Dt. 4:2 & 12:32...' at 'The Regulative Principle of Worship' (RBO).

Objection 3

The third thing they object against the whole body of the Church is this: That we lack that discipline and order which Christ in his Testament has appointed for the government of the Church: for neither have we (say they) the power to bind or to loose, nor those officers by whom the censures of Christ should be exercised. Yea, says Henry Barrow in the 160th page of his *Discovery*, “You have not any one thing, order or administration according to his Testament.” And in the 188th page, such places of Scripture as make express mention of Christ's discipline, as [Rom. 12](#); [1 Cor. 12](#) and [15](#); [2 Cor. 2](#); [Eph. 4](#); [2 Thess. 3](#) and [1 Tim. 5:1](#) are not, says he, suffered so much as to be read in the Church, much less to be sincerely expounded. From these premises see what a conclusion he in the 27th page of his *Discovery* infers: “Without the power,” says he:

“and practice of the diligent watch of every member, but especially of the elders, the Word of God is made an idol, the sacraments sacrilege unto us and all things we do, odious and abominable unto the Lord.”

Answer 3

To this third objection, this answer we give:

First, whereas the discipline of Christ consists in two things, viz. (1) what works and duties Christ would have performed for the ordering and government of his Church, and (2) by what persons and officers He would have these duties exercised: We affirm, that for as much as all these works, viz. preaching of the Word and administration of the sacraments, the censures of admonition, suspension, excommunication and provision for the necessity of the poor are in many of our assemblies performed and by law ought to be in all, that therefore we cannot justly be said to be without the discipline of Christ, but rather that we, having the discipline of Christ (which is most substantial), do lack the other and so exercise it not rightly, that is to say, not by those officers which Christ has appointed.

Secondly, it is well known that the chief works and discipline, namely the preaching of the Word and administration of the sacraments, and consequently the principal part of that power to bind and loose which Christ gave to his Church, is not only

exercised in many of our assemblies, but exercised also by those very officers which Christ has appointed for us: The laws of our land do authorize the minister to stay from the Lord's Table all such as are uncatechized and out of charity, or are any otherwise public offenders (as appears in the rubric before the Communion and in that which is after Confirmation).⁶¹⁵ And from whence else comes the trouble of many of our ministers but from the exercising of this authority, even from the suspending of the ungodly from the sacrament and stinging their consciences by the preaching of the Word?

Thirdly, though none of our assemblies did use this power, it follows not from thence that we have it not: no more than it does follow that the rich churl has no money because he uses none, and that a man therefore has no authority because he does not exercise any.

Fourthly, admit we were not able (through lack of knowledge and courage) to use this power, yet follows it not that therefore we lack the right and authority to use it. For if those Churches which the prophet reproves for putting no difference between the holy and profane ([Eze. 22:26](#)), or that which the apostle blames for not putting the incestuous person from among them [[1 Cor. 5:1-2](#)]: had they lacked authority to use this power, how could they justly have been reprov'd for neglecting the exercising thereof?

Lastly, though it were granted that we lacked both the exercise of the Church's censures and some of those officers which our Savior has appointed to exercise them by, yet might we be a true visible Church notwithstanding:

There was a true Church in Judah all the days of Asa ([2 Chron. 15:9-10](#)) and Jehoshaphat ([2 Chron. 17:5, 9](#)), yet was not the discipline reformed there till the latter days of Jehoshaphat's reign ([2 Chron. 19:8, 11](#)). That also was a true Church even then when the apostles found this fault with them ([1 Cor. 5:1-2](#)). The congregation at Samaria is called a Church before the discipline was established there [[Acts 8; 9:31; 15:3](#)], and even in Jerusalem there was a famous visible Church of Christ long before sundry parts of the discipline (for lack whereof they condemn us) were established there. [[Acts 1:4; 2:46-47; 5:28; 6:7](#);

⁶¹⁵ "The Order for the Administration of the Lord's Supper, or Holy Communion" and "Confirmation, or Laying on of Hands" in *The Booke of Common Prayer, and Administration of the Sacraments...* (1604).

8:1; 8:14; 9:13, 26; 11:22] Yea it is evident that by the apostles themselves diverse Churches were gathered some good space of time before the discipline was settled or exercised by all, which is manifest. (Acts 13:43; 14:11, 21, 23)

That how necessary soever those parts of the discipline (which we lack) be to the beauty and well-being or preservation of the Church, yet are they not necessary to the being thereof, but that a true Church may be without them.⁶¹⁶ And as we may well call him a man that lacks not only sundry parts of his body, as an arm or a leg, or eye, but is also distempered much even in the brain and liver, and heart and the rest of the vital parts, so may we rightly call that a Church which not only lacks sundry of those officers which Christ has ordained, but has also much maimedness and distemper even in the ministry of the Word and the profession of the true Faith (which are as it were the brain and heart of a true Church).

The places of Scripture which they allege to disprove this, which we have said are unskillfully applied, for the one of them mentions no other ordinary officers but pastors and teachers (Eph. 4:11-12), which our Church professes; the other (Rom. 12:8), though it proves there should be other officers besides them there named, yet does it not affirm that without them there can be no true Church.

Objection 4

The fourth thing which they object against the whole body of our assemblies is this: That we stand under (as they say) a false and Antichristian government, for that we are directed by and subject to canons, courts and authority of the bishops, which they do not content themselves in the 68th and 69th pages of their *Collection of Letters and Conferences* to call Popish and Antichristian, and Egyptian and Babylonish yokes, but in regard thereof they say our assemblies cast out Satan by the power of Satan.

⁶¹⁶ See 'Church Government is Not Necessary to the Visible Church, but is for its Well-being' at 'The Church' (RBO).

Answer 4

To this fourth objection we make this answer:

First, seeing it has been already shown that the discipline which our Church exercises is in substance the same with that which Christ instituted, they cannot with any color of truth say that all our Church-government is Popish and Antichristian (2 [Thess. 2:10–11](#); 2 [Tim. 4:1, 3](#); 1 [Jn. 2:22; 4:3](#); 2 [Jn. 7](#); [Rev. 13:5, 16](#)), but only that it is popishly and corruptly administered.

Secondly, though it were confessed that in the callings and authority of the bishops there be diverse things Antichristian, yet see we not how our bishops could truly be called antichrists or antichristians, because:

First, the Word, when it describes Antichrist and teaches us how to know him, marks him out by his false doctrine. [1 [Jn. 2:22; 4:3](#); 2 [Jn. 1:7](#)] Neither can we find in holy Scripture anyone accounted an antichrist or antichristian who, holding the truth of doctrine and professing all the fundamental articles of the Faith, does swerve either in judgment or practice from that rule which Christ has given for the discipline of his Church. Now it is evident that our bishops both do and, by the laws of our land, ought to hold and teach all doctrines and truths that are fundamental. Yea some of them have learnedly and soundly maintained the truth against heretics that have gainsaid it; some have not only by their doctrine and ministry converted many to the truth, but have suffered persecution also for the Gospel. And though Henry Barrow in the 11th page of his *Discovery* call them “pseudo-martyrs” and “runaway professors,” yet can he not prove that they all since their accepting their rooms renounced and are fallen from that truth, which they then suffered for.

Secondly, their hierarchy and other of their corruptions that are charged upon the calling of our bishops were rather to be esteemed as the stairs and way to Antichristianity than Antichristianity itself, which is evident by this, that they

were in the Church before the Pope (who is the Antichrist⁶¹⁷ and the chief head-link of all Antichristianity) was revealed.⁶¹⁸

Thirdly, the Antichristian [Roman] bishops hold their preeminence as [if it were] from God's Law, which is unchangeable, whereas our bishops since her Majesty's reign until this day (for the most part) held their superiority by no other right than by the positive law,⁶¹⁹ which is variable; yea it appears, both by the institution of the courts of delegates and by the continuance thereof to this day, that they do and ought to hold their jurisdiction by law, not as from God, but as from the prince.

Thirdly, admit that both our bishops and the government by them exercised were Antichristian, yet might we that stand in that sort as we do be subject unto them that are the true Church of Christ.⁶²⁰ It is evident that to speak properly, the yoke of Antichrist is only inward and spiritual where the faith and conscience are enjoined upon pain of damnation to receive other laws and worship than that which God in his Word prescribes; and even to this yoke the true Church has been often subject, or else the Church of the Jews even in the days of Christ was no true Church [contra [Lk. 1:54-55, 68-70](#); [Rom. 3:1-2](#); [9:4-5](#); [Eph. 2:12](#)], which held themselves bound in conscience to observe sundry traditions of the elders. [[Mt. 15:1-9](#); [Gal. 1:14](#)]

In a more large sense those prelates are called Antichristian that join civil jurisdiction with ecclesiastical⁶²¹ or usurp more than they ought in external government, or tyrannously abuse the power committed to their hands; and this Antichristian yoke also the true Church has born many a time: in the days of the Maccabees there was a

⁶¹⁷ That the Papal line is the Antichrist was the position of all the Reformed confessions of the Post-Reformation that named the Antichrist (such as the original Westminster Confession 25.6). See '[The Papacy is the Antichrist](#)' (RBO).

⁶¹⁸ [2 Thess. 2:3](#). This revealing is often reckoned with Pope Boniface III in 606 AD, who obtained a decree from emperor Phocas that "the See of Blessed Peter the Apostle should be the head of all the Churches" and that the title of "Universal Bishop" belonged exclusively to the Bishop of Rome.

⁶¹⁹ Positive law is in contrast to natural law and divine law, entailing a form of human law (in this case by the English civil government) which may be conditional and subject to change. See '[On Positive Laws & Ordinances](#)' (RBO). Bishops Joseph Hall and George Downname, being exceptions, argued episcopacy was by divine law.

⁶²⁰ See '[On Material Cooperation with Bishops](#)' at '[On Prelacy & Episcopacy](#)' (RBO).

⁶²¹ That ecclesiastical persons ought not to serve in civil capacities with civil authority in ordinary circumstances, apart from necessity, see '[May Church-Officers Hold Civil Office?](#)' at '[Civil Government](#)' (RBO). Note, however, that serving in both capacities is possible and does not necessarily invalidate their authority in either capacity; see [footnote 695](#).

true Church among the Jews, yet did the priests exercise civil jurisdiction.⁶²² There was a true Church, both in Jeremiah [Jer. 32:1; ch. 42; 50:6] and Ezekiel's days (Eze. 34:3–6), which yet did bear this Antichristian yoke. (Jer. 5:31; 20:1–2)⁶²³

The authority which our bishops are said to usurp over the ministers and Church is not worse than that which Diotrephes usurped; for besides that he sought for an Antichristian preeminence [3 Jn. 1:9], it is evident that the Church was unable to resist him; and therefore the apostle purposed himself to come and rebuke him [3 Jn. 1:10]. Their own terms they use in this, viz. “Egyptian, and Babylonish yoke,” shall teach them thus much; for seeing that the Jews remained still the Church of God even in that bondage that they stood under in Egypt [Isa. 11:11, 16; 52:1–4] and Babylon [Jer. 29], why may not we also remain God’s Church still notwithstanding the yoke which we bear, it being nothing so heavy as that was?

Objection 5

The last thing they object against the whole body of our assemblies is this: That we obstinately continue in the aforesaid lacks and corruptions, though we have been convinced concerning this point. They have these words in the 23rd page of their *Refutation*:

“We hold withal that no true Church or Christian will maintain any sin or error when it is evidently shown and convinced to them by the Word of God, much less persecute such as reprove and admonish them, as you do.”

In the 164th page they charge us with willful obstinacy, open rejecting and resisting the truth, etc.

⁶²² 1 Macc. 10:18–20; 11:27; 14:41–42; 2 Macc. 4:7–10. That ecclesiastical persons can be capable of lawfully delegated civil authority, however improper this be except in extraordinary circumstances, see footnote 695.

⁶²³ See ‘On Compliance with, or a Tolerable Submission to Practices of Erastianism where Possible or under Necessity’ at ‘Erastianism’ (RBO).

Answer 5

To this reason we also give this answer: That neither do our assemblies continue in the aforesaid lacks and corruptions; nor if they did should they therefore cease to be a true Church, for:

First, it is evident that many ministers and congregations have both by prayer unto God and all means (that have been in their powers to use) testified unto men their earnest desire to have these corruptions removed and the true discipline established.

Secondly, the most of them that maintain the evils that are amongst us and repugn the reformation which the rest have sought, cannot be justly charged with willful obstinacy or committing those things wherein their own consciences do condemn them ([Tit. 3:11](#)), for, seeing they profess and pretend that they are not yet in their judgment persuaded of these things and the whole conversation [conduct] of many of them is such as gives us just cause to believe them, who dare be so presumptuous as to judge thus of their hearts and consciences, though he were sure they have lacked no means whereby they might have been convinced, considering that it is one thing to have had the means of convincing, another thing to be convinced. The former whereof may be performed to us by men, the other by the Lord only; and that a people in whom some right means of convincing have not been effectual may as well be the true Church of God as they that have received and profited by all right means that have been used for their instruction and reformation of life.

Thirdly, we have not yet had the right means used to convince us in sundry of those matters that are in controversy between us and them; for proof whereof we refer ourselves to the answer which we will hereafter make unto their articles in their conclusion.⁶²⁴

Fourthly, though not only the right means had been used to convict us, but they had also so far prevailed with us that in judgment we saw the truth (which they say is not practiced amongst us) and in heart did affect it, yet would this sufficiently clear us from the crime of willful obstinacy: that we have not power without the consent and permission of Christian magistrates (under whom we live, by whose means we enjoy

⁶²⁴ p. 281 ff. below.

so many great benefits and whom if we should thus far provoke we should evidently hazard the loss of those things wherein the very life and being of a visible Church consists) either to remove the corruptions that remain amongst us or to establish those Church orders which we lack. For although we doubt not but the whole truth of Christ's doctrine may be lawfully taught (though all the magistrates in the world gainsay it) and practiced also so far forth by every Christian as the bounds of his particular calling permits, and that it is the magistrate's principal honor in the sight of God and man to yield and submit himself to the instructions, reproofs and censures of the Church so far forth as they are agreeable to the Word of God, who is Lord of lords and King of kings: yet we cannot see good reason to persuade us that the Church ought or may either pull down corrupt Church government or erect the right discipline, not only without, but contrary to the liking of Christian magistrates. Thus much we find in the Word of God:

First, that in those public reformations of the Church which the Word commends, the Christian and godly princes were ever the principal actors. [1 Kn. 8:1-3; 15:11-12; 2 Kn. 22:1-2; 23:1-3; 2 Chron. 14:2-5; 17:6-9; 19:4-6; 26:4-5; 29:2-4; 30:1; Ps. 72:1-2; Prov. 29:2; 2 Tim. 2:1-2]

Secondly, that for the lack of public reformation the magistrate is everywhere blamed [1 Kings 15:14; 22:43; 2 Kn. 10:29; 12:2-3; 14:3-4; 15:35; 2 Chron. 28:24-25; Jer. 36:24-25] and nowhere the Church for ought we can find: oft are the priests and people blamed for: erecting and practicing idolatry [1 Kn. 14:22-23; 2 Kn. 17:9-11; Jer. 7:30-31; 11:13-14; Eze. 8:10-16; 20:28-29; 23:37-39; Hos. 4:12-13], but never for that they plucked it not down when their princes had set them up. [2 Kn. 23:4-5] Neither can we find whether ever the Church under a Christian magistrate was by any prophet either commanded to deal otherwise than by persuasion in public reformation when the magistrate neglected it or was reproved for the contrary.⁶²⁵

⁶²⁵ Note that Gideon's throwing down the altar of Baal (Judg. 6:25-27) was (1) at the special command of God, (2) he was not an ecclesiastical person and (3) it was extraordinary, in contrast to the regular *modus operandi*.

The authors' view is founded on the principle of *circa sacra*, that, to use the words of Rutherford, there is "A power-external about Church-matters, which is objective, in respect of the object, sacred or ecclesiastic, but improperly, and by a figure only [is it] ecclesiastic, and essentially and in itself [it is] politic, such as we hold to be the magistrate's power in causing Church-men [to] do their duty in preaching sound

doctrine, and administrating the sacraments, according to Christ's institution." *Due Right*, pt. 2, [Appendix](#), p. 387. Gillespie likewise: "about the same things the civil power is occupied, as touching the outward man, or the outward disposing of divine things in this or that dominion, as was said; not as they are spiritual and evangelical ordinances piercing into the conscience itself..." *CXI Propositions concerning the Ministry & Government of the Church* (Edinburgh: Evan Tyler, 1647), #54–55. For more on this principle, see Fentiman, *Circa Sacra*, pp. 10–34. For more material espousing the authors' view, or something similar to it, see 'On Caution & Restraints in Reforming, in doing so far as Peace & Order allows without Public Disturbance or Schism' at 'On Reforming & Reformation' (RBO). Note the full title of Browne's work, specifying the principle of his opposition: *A Treatise of Reformation without Tarrying for Any, and of the Wickedness of those Preachers which will not Reform till the Magistrate Command or Compel Them* (1582).

A primary issue is: Who has the office or public authority about religion according to external, civil order, provision and peace? Amandus Polanus: "The public introduction of true religion, or public reformation from corruptions, must ordinarily be carried out by the prince, or the supreme magistrate: for it belongs to his office, as the examples of Moses, Joshua, David, Asa ([2 Chron. 14–15](#)), Jehoshaphat ([ch. 17, 19](#)), Hezekiah ([ch. 29–30](#)), Josiah ([2 Chron. 34–35](#)), and also Constantine the Great, and Theodosius the Great, and others shows." *Syntagma theologiae christianae* (1609; Hanau, 1615), vol. 2, bk. 9, ch. 1, [col. 3707](#), tr. Charles Johnson.

Gifford: "if this Christian prince do err in some matters of doctrine, or touching the rules of discipline, yet holding and maintaining all the fundamental points of the Christian faith, so that there be abuses and corruptions in the Church, every private godly man is to keep a good conscience, not breaking the unity and peace of the faithful, but not to take public authority to reform." *Short Treatise*, p. 105.

Bairdie: "judging ye still adhere to the doctrine of your Church, and of all the Reformed, expressed in their Confessions of Faith, and the writings of their worthies against the Papists, Anabaptists and Erastians, who (though against Erastians) they deny the magistrate any power *in sacris*, or formally and intrinsically ecclesiastical... yet (against the Papists and Anabaptists) they attribute unto him an imperative power *circa sacra*, about the matters of God, formally civil and only objectively ecclesiastical, and to be put forth *modo civili*, in a civil way and by civil means: so that there is nothing so sacred in the visible matters of religion, but it is the object of his care and procuratorship, and his power [is] to be conversant about it in [a] manner competent (as [William] Ames tells, *Cases of Conscience*, bk. 5, [ch. 25](#), thesis 8)... which is also confirmed from [Dt. 31:9](#); [17:18–19](#) with [Josh. 1:7–9](#). This power, and by virtue of it, his just intermeddling for the good of religion, is uncontroverted by orthodox divines... Which power (if through error or wickedness) the magistrate employ for the hurt, rather than for the good of the Church (though that be a fault), yet we judge ye will not call it Erastianism, or an usurpation of an unlawful power, but an abuse or misapplication of a lawful [authority]; and will count him peccant [erring] in the matter, not in the authority or power." *Balm from Gilead*, pp. 26–27. Bairdie later poses the question: "whether the magistrate's error here be... only in the matter, abusing his just power and misapplying it to unjust purposes, as sometimes he may do in civil cases;" *Balm from Gilead*, p. 76.

Note WCF 23.3 says it is the authority and duty of the magistrate by the Second Commandment "to take order, that unity and peace be preserved in the Church, that the truth of God be kept pure and entire..." Byfield: "if magistrates do appoint inconvenient things and burden the Church with them when there would be no great inconvenience to the Church if such things were not... yet the people are bound to obey still, because we cannot be freed from our subjection laid upon us by God except it appear to us that they command not only an inconvenience, but a sin, as all sound divines confess." *Commentary, on 1 Pet. 2:13*, p. 435.

On making religious reformation apart from or against the magistrate's in extraordinary circumstances: Polanus, with reasons: *Syntagma*, vol. 2, bk. 9, ch. 1, [cols. 3707–8](#). See 'On Making Reformation according to One's Place & Calling, even Possibly Without or Against the Will of Higher Authorities' at 'On Reforming & Reformation' (RBO).

Rutherford: "the reason why the high places are not taken away is given in [2 Chron. 20:33](#), for as yet the people "had not prepared their heart unto the God of their fathers;" but you will reply, elicit acts of maintenance of true religion are commanded to the people, and that the places prove; but the question is

To that which they were wont to say: Then the apostles were much to blame, who in erecting the Church government never waited for, nor sought the magistrates' leave and good liking. We answer:

First, that though without the magistrates' leave they did it, yet not contrary to his liking, or when he opposed his authority directly and inhibited it,⁶²⁶ they never erected the discipline when there was so direct an opposition made against it by the civil magistrates.

Secondly, if it could be proved that the apostles did so then, yet would it not follow that we also may do so now, for neither was the heathen magistrate altogether so much to be respected by the Church as the Christian magistrate is [1 Tim. 6:2]; neither have our ministers and people now so full and absolute a power to pull down and set up orders in the Church as the apostles (those wise master-builders) had.

Lastly, though this were all proved, that our assemblies are thoroughly convinced in these points and that we, having power to reform that which is amiss, do yet voluntarily continue in those lacks and corruptions, yet might we be the true churches of Christ notwithstanding, for as true faith in Christ, not moral obedience, is that which gives life and being to every true member of the Church [Rom. 5:1; Gal.

de actibus imperatis, 'of commanded acts' of religion, sure none but the magistrate is to command others to worship God according to his Word. I answer, in ordinary [circumstances] only, magistrates (not the king only but all the princes of the land) and judges are to maintain religion by their commandments (Dt. 1:16; 2 Chron. 1:2; Dt. 16:19; Eccl. 5:8; Hab. 1:4; Mic. 3:9; Zech. 7:9; Hos. 5:10-11), and to take care of religion; but when the judges decline from God's way and corrupt the law, we find the people punished and rebuked for it: Jer. 15:4, 'And I will cause them to be removed to all kingdoms of the earth, because of Manasseh, the son of Hezekiah king of Judah, for that which he did in Jerusalem;' 1 Sam. 12:24-25, 'Only fear the Lord; but if ye shall still do wickedly, ye shall be consumed, both ye and your king.' And this case, I grant, is extraordinary..." *Lex Rex...* (1644; Edinburgh: Ogle, 1843), p. 55 rt col - 56 lt col bot.

Note in relation to non-conformity: as the power of eliciting religious acts extends further than the power of publicly commanding religious acts with due authority, so in resistance to public authorities, one might elicit such acts (and that with others consenting of their own will) where one might not publicly command and enforce such acts over others.

⁶²⁶ Note that Acts 4:18-20, where the apostles go against the direct command of authorities, has regard to, not simply setting up Church government, but to speaking at all about Jesus. See a more detailed treatment of this passage by the authors on pp. 267-68 below. No other New Testament passages explicitly speak to the issue of magistrates prohibiting the setting up of Church government, though it be known that persecution against Christianity occurred in that century when some Church government was already established.

2:16], so the profession of true faith in Christ, rather than obedience, is that which gives the life and being to a visible assembly:

So we read that many upon their profession of faith were baptized and incorporated into the Church ([Acts 8:12-13, 16, 31-32](#)), so that which made the Romans a true Church in the judgment of Paul was that their faith was published throughout the world ([Rom. 1:8](#)); and generally, that which made the gentiles (to whom he preached) a true Church, was that they gave obedience of faith. ([Rom. 1:5](#)) Neither do we see what difference they will make betwixt the Covenant of Works and the Covenant of Grace if they hold obedience to the commandments of God necessary to the life and first-being of a true Christian Church.

And as a wife ceases not to be a wife, though in many things she cease to be willfully obedient to her husband, unless she sin either by desertion or whoredom and be divorced [[Mt. 5:32](#); [1 Cor. 7:15](#)], so neither the Church ceases to be the Church and spouse of Christ till she be both sufficiently convinced of atheism or idolatry and be divorced also [[Isa. 50:1](#)], the Lord taking from her his Word and sacraments and all other of his spiritual jewels and ornaments: In the [third chapter of Jeremiah](#), both Israel and Judah were charged with idolatry, and yet must we needs confess that they still continued the true Church of God,⁶²⁷ unless we will say there was at that time no true visible Church in the world, which was most absurd to affirm.

So the Corinthians, being in the first epistle convinced of the sin of idolatry ([1 Cor. 10:14](#)) and other sins ([2 Cor. 6:14](#); [12:21](#); [13:2](#)), the Church remaining in them, as appears in the second epistle, did yet continue to be the true Church of God notwithstanding, and so are called in the same epistle ([2 Cor. 1:1](#)). That which Henry Barrow in the [94th page](#) of their *Refutation* excuses this Church by, viz. that it was orderly gathered and established, may as well be alleged for our assemblies as for the Church of Corinth, as (we hope) may appear by that which has been above said in our answer to the first objection they make against the whole body of our Church.

⁶²⁷ That is, while they both were charged with idolatry, Judah had not yet been divorced. [Jer. 3:8](#) does say Northern Israel had been divorced and put away, namely in the Assyrian captivity in 722 B.C.

He that was once a brother, though he persist in his sins he has been convinced of, not by one brother only, but by two or three ([Mt. 18:15-16](#)), yea though he commit some presumptuous sins, ceases not to be a brother notwithstanding [[2 Thess. 3:15](#)]:⁶²⁸ How much less shall a Church cease to be a true Church because it has been convinced of some gross corruptions, by one or some few?

The high places were continued in Israel and Judah, and that under the reign of sundry good kings [[1 Kn. 3:3](#); [15:14](#); [22:43](#); [2 Kn. 12:2-3](#); [14:1-4](#), etc.], notwithstanding the reproof of many prophets [[1 Kn. 22:42-43](#); [2 Chron. 15:1-2, 8, 17](#); [17:6](#); [19:2-3](#); [20:33](#)]. Yet were those of Israel and Judah accounted the Church still; neither did the prophets cease to communicate with them. ([2 Kings 1:3](#); [15:3-4](#)) Neither would those that remained in Babylon after the proclamation of Cyrus to return (which was also the commandment of God, [2 Chron. 36:22](#)), thrust out of the account of the Church, as appears by the communion of them with the Church of Jerusalem and the books of Ezra and Nehemiah, notwithstanding (partly in fear of the danger, partly in a love of the commodity which they settled themselves in during the captivity) they did not build the Temple in person, but only sent money for the building. ([Ezra 1:4, 6](#); [7:12-28](#); [Neh. 2:7-9](#); [7:6, 70-72](#))

Lastly, the apostle sets down a rule which is directly contrary to this fourth article of their first exception in these words:

“Let us therefore as many as are perfect be thus minded, and if in anything ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal the same unto you. Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule that we may mind the same thing.” ([Phil. 3:15-16](#))

whereby it appears that with those who hold the foundation we both may and ought to hold and join ourselves in the things wherein we are agreed, notwithstanding our differences in those things that are not fundamental.

⁶²⁸ The authors are either highlighting the case where a professing Christian has been convinced of his sin by two or three witnesses but has not yet been excommunicated by Church authority, or that it was lesser excommunication (from the Lord's Table) which was inflicted (and not greater excommunication). Rutherford argues that even greater excommunication (from [2 Thess. 3:15](#)) does not wholly make the person to cease being a visible Christian brother in every way: ‘Of the Status of Someone Greater-Excommunicated & How They Should be Treated’ at ‘On Excommunication’ (RBO).

By all which it is manifest how false and dangerous a doctrine that is which Henry Barrow in the 28th page of his *Discovery* affirms, that presumptuous sin with obstinacy joined thereunto breaks the Covenant with God. If he had said it gives the Lord just cause to cast us off and to make void that Covenant whereby He had bound Himself unto us, we would have consented. But that the everlasting covenant of God is utterly broken by a presumptuous sin committed with obstinacy, if we should grant this, we should condemn the generation of the just and darken much the glory of God's mercy, who is constant in love towards those whom He has received into Covenant even though they be many times inconstant and unfaithful unto Him [2 Sam. 11:14-27; Ex. 20:5-6]. And even as a husband or wife ceases not presently to be a husband or wife when they have committed adultery [Hos. 3:1-5], till by just divorce they be separated, so it is in this case as we have above said.

We have a True Ministry in England

2nd Exception

The second general exception is against the ministry of our Church, which they affirm to be false and Antichristian. Concerning which they have these words in the 146th and 147th pages of their *Refutation*:

“...we have perused all this rabble of the ministry of the Church of England and have not found any one of them right, or almost, in any point according to the right rules of Christ's Testament; they are all strangers there, they belong not to Christ's body, his Church, neither are they knit as members unto that Head.”

And in the 147th page of the same book they say that our ministers are such as can have no promise or blessing from God, alleging moreover, that the ways of the false Church and minister are the ways of death, and have no promise of salves; and in the 147th page they have these words:

“Out of the smoke of the bottomless pit all their ministers come, whence that fallen star, Antichrist has the key thereof given him, to his Kingdom the false Church, they have always belonged, always served him in his several shapes; they have been always knit to him as members to the head; from him and not from Christ, we all see with our bodily eyes that the Church of England has received them.”

And in the 158th page of the same book they conclude thus:

“The keeping of these offices cannot now belong unto or serve in Christ's Kingdom, His Church, neither be knit unto Christ as the Head. But as the Holy Ghost witnesses of them, they have a king over them, the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name is in Hebrew, *Abaddon*, and in Greek, *Apollyon* [[Rev. 9:11](#)], as in all languages and places they discover.”

Answer

That we have a true ministry in this land may evidently appear by these reasons:

Firstly, a true Church (such as we have proved ours to be in our answer to their first exception) could neither have received our doctrine at the first, nor proved it so long,

nor have been continued, nourished and built up by it had not we been the true, faithful ministers of Christ. ([Jn. 10:3, 5](#); [Eph. 4:11-12](#); [2 Jn. 4:6](#))

Secondly, it is evident that many have been brought by our ministry to saving knowledge, faith and reformation of life. For proof whereof we appeal:

First, to their own consciences, out of which we desire them to answer us as in the presence of Almighty God;

Secondly, by the manifest differences that may be noted betwixt those that have been taught by a learned ministry and those that have had none, who yet should be in judgment and affection as good or better than the other if the ministry under which the other lived were not true and lawful.

That this reason taken from the fruit of our labors is sufficient to prove we are the true ministers of God appears in this:

First, that the Lord in his most holy Word makes this the most proper note of such ministry, as is according to his own heart. ([Jer. 3:15, 23](#); [1 Thess. 1:1-9](#))

Secondly, in that the ministry is oft justified and proved to be of God by this reason: so our Savior Christ proves Himself to be the true Messiah by doing the works of the Messiah. ([Jn. 5:36](#); [10:25](#)) So may we prove ourselves true ministers by doing the works of God, his ministers. ([Mt. 12:5-6](#); [2 Cor. 9:1](#))

To that which they object against this reason, viz. that thereby the Popish Church and ministry may be justified as well as ours, seeing that many have been converted by private conference and reading and by domestical preaching and exhortations without a public Church calling, we answer that though the Lord has been often wont heretofore, and is able still to convert souls by private means and such as are extraordinary, yet cannot it be proved that any have been converted usually or that public congregations have been gathered and built up by any private interpretations and application of the Scriptures, but by such only as has been used by a lawful ministry.⁶²⁹ ([Eph. 4:11-12](#); [Rom. 10:14-15](#)) And whereas Henry Barrow excepts further, [pages 152 and 153](#) of his *Refutation*, that this argues only true doctrine and not a true ministry, we answer:

⁶²⁹ This same argument, opened up at large from Scripture, will be found in Rutherford's article quoted in '[Rutherford's Distinctions regarding Lay-Preaching](#)' at 'Preaching' (RBO).

First, that thereby he justifies our doctrine, which elsewhere he generally condemns.

Secondly, that he affirms only that true doctrine without a true ministry does ordinarily convert men, but proves it not, nor indeed was able to prove it, as shall hereafter appear in the answer we make to the second article of their consequence.

But our ministers have no promise of blessing in their teaching (say they) and therefore neither may they lawfully teach, nor the people hear them.⁶³⁰ To this we answer:

First, that God's ministers have lawfully taught when they have not only lacked the promise that their labor should do that people good whom they did teach, but received assurance of the contrary. ([Eze. 3:1-7](#))

Secondly, that the people have lawfully heard and hearkened to teachers that have come unto them when they (as being utterly ignorant and unacquainted with God's promises) had no assurance to their consciences that God had promised a blessing to their hearing. ([Jon. 3:4-10](#))

1st Objection

The first thing they object against our ministers is that the office whereunto our ministry is called is not that which Christ has ordained, but that which Antichrist calls his priests unto. Concerning these points, these are their words in the [158th page](#) of their *Refutation*: "They have served in and belonged unto Antichrist, even the Pope's Kingdom and throne, the false Church, with all the abominable idolatry therein."

⁶³⁰ On the issue of occasional hearing, one must distinguish an apostate Church not to be countenanced ([1 Kings 13](#)), versus an impure Church which is not apostate, and also circumstances of necessity. On hearing ministers of impure, but not-apostate Churches (in at least some circumstances), see '[For Occasional Hearing](#)' at 'On Schism & Separatism (RBO).

With regard to apostate Churches: Rutherford, "A communion in worship true in the matter, where the person called, for example, the preacher, is a minister of Antichrist, is unlawful, because we are not to acknowledge any of Babel or Baal's priests professing their calling to be of the Pope, the Man of Sin." *A Peaceable & Temperate Plea for Paul's Presbytery in Scotland* (London, 1642), [ch. 10](#), p. 149.

Answer 1

To their objection we give this answer: The preaching of the whole truth of God's Word, and nothing but it, the administration of the sacraments and of public prayer, as they are all the parts of the minister's office prescribed in the Word, so are they all appointed to our ministers by the law. And for so much as there is no priesthood in the Popish Church that is not ordained to offer that idolatrous sacrifice of the mass, or that was ever called unto and necessarily enjoined those duties of ministry that are required of us, we see not with what truth our brethren can say that our office is the same which Antichrist calls his priests unto. And if our office be the same which Antichrist has ordained, how falls it out that the Papists give a new ordination to such as, having had that which our Church gives, do in apostasy shrink unto them?

And if it be objected that our Church admits such as were ordained by Antichrist without any new ordination,⁶³¹ whereby it appears that our office and theirs is all one, we answer:

First, that though they have no other ordination, yet in more essential parts of their outward calling unto the ministry there are so many differences to be observed in the practice of our Church that no indifferent man can think we judge the calling that any man has had in popery to be sufficient for the exercise of their ministry in our Church.

Secondly, the receiving of some into the ministry that have been popish priests without new ordination, as we take it to be a grievous corruption and such as we will by no means seek to justify, so we think it cannot by any show of good reason be alleged to prove that the calling which all our ministers have is the very same which the Popish priests exercise, but only to show that either the outward calling which

⁶³¹ The dominant view of the reformed in the Post-Reformation was that Roman ordination was valid, and ought not to be repeated. See '[On Rome's Ordination & Ministry](#)' at '[On the Roman Church being a Church, She being Apostate, her Baptism being Valid...](#)' (RBO). Our authors, however, take the lack of a further protestant ordination "to be a grievous corruption," though their answer below is very careful to reflect divided views and practices in the Anglican Church on such, especially among dissenters, setting parameters, while denying that the Anglican Church's practice as a whole legitimizes the Separatists' accusatory inference that the lack of a further protestant ordination (amongst some ministers) causes the Anglican ministry to be "all one" with the Roman priesthood.

Our authors' view against the validity of Roman ordination would appear to be at variance with their position below that Roman baptism, at least "which we have received from Popish priests in the time of ignorance," is valid. An invalid minister cannot give a valid baptism (see '[Only Ministers are to Baptize, with No Exceptions](#)' at '[Baptism](#)' RBO), and ignorance validating baptism would seem to validate ordination done in ignorance.

some of our ministers exercise is the very same with that of the popish priests, or (at the most) that some chief governors in the Church do in their judgment hold that there is no new ordination to be required in such a case, both which if we should grant, yet had they granted nothing at all in the question that is betwixt us.

The first reason whereby they would prove that office whereunto our ministers are called is not that which Christ has ordained but that whereunto Antichrist has called his priests is that we are called unto such a deaconship as is not according unto Christ's Testament, but is Popish and Antichristian. Whereunto we answer:

1. That if the deaconship and priesthood (as they term it) be taken by us both at once, as usually they are⁶³² (Phil. 1:1; 1 Tim. 3:8, δᾱκονος), then we are enabled to do whatsoever a minister of the Gospel may do of himself without the assistance of the eldership (Acts 1:17, 25; 6:4; 12:25; 1 Cor. 12:5), and so the error that is committed rests in the form and ceremony only, not in the matter itself. (Acts 20:24; Rom. 12:13; Eph. 3:7; Col. 1:7, 23; 1 Tim. 4:6, διακονία)

Secondly, though it were indeed to be wished that every office in the Church were called by the proper name which the Scripture gives it, yet if the Church give a wrong name to a right and lawful office, the office is not therefore to be refused [Mt. 23:7–8; Jn. 1:38, 49; 3:2, 26; 6:25], much less is the power to preach the Word and to administer the one of the sacraments therefore to be refused because it is given by the name of the deacon's office,⁶³³ considering that although in the strict and most proper sense the Scripture calls them "deacons" to whom the office of caring for the poor is committed [Acts 6:1–6; 1 Tim. 3:8–13], yet sometimes also all that labor in the Word are comprehended under this name [in Greek in Rom. 15:8, 1 Cor. 3:5, 2 Cor. 3:6, Eph.

⁶³² Following certain early Church precedents, often deacons in the Anglican context were promoted to be made priests (or ministers), and normally one had to be a deacon to become a priest. If a person was to immediately become a priest, he would first be made a deacon and then a priest, though waiting periods were sometimes enforced. While this was different from typical presbyterian practice, note 'That the Higher Offices contain the Calling, Authority & Functions of the Lower Offices' at 'The Offices of the Church' (RBO).

⁶³³ In the Anglican church in that context deacons could by Church-law, at least sometimes, preach and baptize, which things do not properly belong to their office. See 'Deacons have No Authority by Divine Office for Baptizing or Preaching' at 'Deacons' (RBO). It appears from this passage, however, that some of those being ordained "deacons" considered their office to be that of the minister (who could preach and baptize), though they were yet hindered from administering the Lord's Supper. As to receiving the Supper from a minister who is wrongly called a "deacon," if this indeed be wrong, see: 'On Performing Necessary Duties though Others Sin in Them' at 'On Impurities in Worship' (RBO).

3:7, Col. 1:23 and 1 Tim. 4:6], and the ministry of the Word is called a “deaconsip” [in Greek in Acts 6:4, Rom. 11:13, 2 Cor. 3:7–9, Eph. 4:12, Col. 1:25, 1 Tim. 1:12].

Thirdly, if it be objected that our deaconsip is neither approved nor mentioned in the Scripture because it restrains us from dealing with the one sacrament [of the Supper] and so separates those things which God has coupled [Mt. 19:6], we answer that this can be no reason against our ministers, because when they are made deacons they are not called to do anything that is unlawful, but only cut short for a time and restrained from something which they may or ought to do;⁶³⁴ much less can it be alleged against all our ministers because many of us (as it is above said) were made both deacons and priests (as they speak fondly) in one day, and so took the full power and authority of ministry without any such separation, or any as is here objected.

Their second reason against our office and function is that they are not known by the right names that in the Word are given to the ministers of Christ, but by such names as have been devised and given by the Papists, as “priest,” “parson,” “vicar” and “curate,” etc. To which we answer:

First, concerning the name “priest,” although we think that at the first it was well enough applied to the preachers of the Word, because it was derived from the Greek word, πρεσβύτερος [*presbyteros*],⁶³⁵ that signifies an elder [presbyter], yet because it is used now by the profane as a term of scorn and has a long time, both by Papists and others, been by common custom abused and appropriated to such as do sacrifice, therefore not only the most of our people refuse to call us by that name but even some who have been chief governors of our Church have judged it unfit to be given unto the ministers of the Gospel. (Bishop Horne, *Against Feckman*, fol. 95, 111)⁶³⁶

⁶³⁴ Westminster Larger Catechism 99.5, “That what God forbids, is at no time to be done; what He commands, is always our duty; and yet every particular duty is not to be done at all times. (Mt. 12:7)” See ‘On How Positive Commands Are Not to be Done at All Times & Circumstances’ and ‘On the Priority of not Doing that which is Forbidden over Keeping that which is Commanded (when they Cannot be Done at the Same Time)’ at ‘On the Relations Between the 1st & 2nd Tables of the Law’ (RBO).

⁶³⁵ So *The Compact Edition of the Oxford English Dictionary: Complete Text Reproduced Micrographically*, 2 vols. (Oxford University Press, 1971), vol. 2, “priest”, p. 1352.

⁶³⁶ Robert Horne (1519? –1580), *An Answer made by Rob. Bishop of Wynchester, to a book entitled, The Declaration of such Scruples & Stays of Conscience Touching the Oath of the Supremacy, as Mr. John Fekenham by writing did deliver unto the L. Bishop of Winchester with his resolutions made thereunto* (London: Henry Wykes, 1566), pp. 95 & 111.

Secondly, it is well known not only that many of our ministers are usually called by such names as the Scripture gives but also that the law of the land (in the *Book of Consecration*) gives us the name of “pastors,” “teachers” and “rectors”.

Thirdly, though the names objected against us have been used by the Papists, and therefore are very unfit to be given to the ministers of the Gospel, yet see we not that either by their original or use they have any such contagion in them as should poison and infect all the offices and duties whereunto they are applied.

Fourthly, though those names were of themselves of an Antichristian original and use, yet if they be imposed upon any such as take no pleasure in them, we see not how they can any way pollute them and their offices more than Joseph and Daniel were polluted by heathenish and idolatrous names that were given them ([Gen. 41:45](#); [Dan. 1:7](#)), or than private Christians are made the worse by the odious terms ([1 Cor. 1:12–13](#)) of Precisians,⁶³⁷ Puritans and Martinists,⁶³⁸ or than our brethren themselves are by the names of Brownists and Barrowists, which they so usually are called by and so much dislike.

Fifthly, if neither the law nor the people did give us any other names than such as are popish, and we also did glory in them ourselves, yet this makes nothing to the condemnation of our office and doctrine, seeing that though the name of “Pharisee” was not of divine institution, yet Christ Himself gives approbation to the office of preaching which they exercised ([Mt. 23:2](#)).

Their third reason against our office and function is: That we are called to read stinted prayers that are devised and imposed by men: concerning which they say, [page 62](#) of their *Discovery*, of the Book of Common Prayer, all the priests of the land are sworn to use it in manner and form prescribed and in the book is included the whole form and substance of their ministry; and in the [63rd page](#), the Book of Common Prayer is the very groundwork of their faith, Church and ministry and in place to them of the Word of God. And in the [64th page](#), the Word of God may not be taught, but when this book has first been read and has had the preeminence. To all which we give this answer:

⁶³⁷ The puritans (an initially derisive term itself), being precise about the Lord’s matters ([Mt. 5:19](#)), were often derogatorily called Precisionists.

⁶³⁸ [Martin Mar-Prelate](#) was the pseudonym of the author of the puritan Marprelate tracts in the late-1580’s, which scoffed at the impurities of the Anglican Church.

First that a seen and prescript form of prayer may lawfully be used, we have proved already in our answer to their second objection against our Church.⁶³⁹

Secondly, if to have a prescript form of prayer is lawful in itself, we see not how this should make it unlawful, that it is prescribed by the Church and authorized by the Christian magistrate, for which we also refer ourselves to that answer we have already given to the second objection against our Church.

Thirdly, though by statute the ministers be commanded to read prayer, yet do we deny that is enjoined as any essential part of our office, seeing that in the form of ordination appointed by law there is no such thing required of us, but we are there only charged with the preaching of the Word, prayer and administration of the sacraments and discipline of Christ. And that statute which ratifies the Communion-Book, respects not the substance of our office, but order only and uniformity. Neither does any law of our land deny him to be a true and lawful minister which preaches the Word aright, though he never read prayers according to that book, whereof the practice of our Church is a sufficient proof, wherein there are many ministers allowed that never meddled with that book and many, both school-masters and others, by the bishops are permitted to read it publicly, though they be not in the account of ministers. And, which is more, private men may (by statute) read it in their private houses:

All which proves evidently the reading of the Book of Common Prayer is not taken to be of the substance of our ministry, nor absolutely necessary to the being of a minister in our Church. And therefore we cannot but wonder to read those accusations (which are so notoriously known to be false and slanderous) in their writings who pretend such love to sincerity and are so sharp censurers, even of the secret faults of other men.

Their fourth reason against the office we exercise is: That we are called to read ungodly prayers; whereunto we answer:

First, it is most clear that many ministers in our Church use not to read any of those prayers which you account for the matter ungodly, and that therefore this can be no good reason against all our ministers.

⁶³⁹ See pp. 221–23 above.

Secondly, if all did use to read them, yet are they not in their ordination called to read them (as has been above proved), so that if they read them, the fault is in them and not in the office they exercise.

Thirdly, if they were enjoined to read ungodly prayers and did accordingly read them, this cannot make their ministry void or Antichristian, for then Uriah should have been no priest, in that he made an altar at Jerusalem like that in all points which was at Damascus (2 Kn. 16:11): whereas it is evident that he continued the priest of the Lord still [2 Kn. 16:15-16], notwithstanding that great fault which was beyond all comparison greater than this that is in question.

Their fifth reason against our office is: That we are called to read homilies and injunctions, whereunto we answer:

First, that neither do the most of our ministers read homilies; neither does any law of the land require that preachers should read them.

Secondly, if law did enjoin them to all, and all did read them, yet are they not enjoined in our ordination, nor accounted by law as substantial parts of our office. Neither is there any doubt made in our land (no not by them that do press the precise observation of law in this point) whether he be a lawful minister who does not read either homilies or injunctions.

Their sixth reason against our office is: That we are called to marry, bury and church women.⁶⁴⁰ To which also we answer:

First, that it is no part of our office (whereunto in ordination we are called) to do these things.

Secondly, as the ministers use to bless the marriages that are made in our land, so make we no doubt but that it is lawful and fit (as a matter not of substance, but of good order) that they should do it.⁶⁴¹ For as it is necessary that this ordinance of God [Mt. 19:4-6] should be sanctified by the Word and prayer [1 Tim. 4:3-5], so it cannot

⁶⁴⁰ The churching of women refers to a form in the Prayer-book where women after childbirth would come to the minister in the church building for a special blessing, prayer, etc. See “The Thanksgiving of Women after Childbirth, commonly called, The Churching of Women” in *The Booke of Common Prayer* (1604).

⁶⁴¹ On the justification for ministers performing marriages see ‘On the Warrant for, & History of a Pastoral Benediction upon the Wedded Couple’ at ‘Marriage’ (RBO).

be inconvenient that the Word and prayer, whereby it is sanctified, should be administered by him who in a special sort is appointed of God to be the steward and disposer of all his mysteries [2 Cor. 5:20] and to whom in his ministerial actions greater promises are made than to any other man [Jer. 3:15; Eph. 3:7–9; 4:11–15; 1 Tim. 4:16], though he do the very same thing; and seeing that in these days it prevents many dangerous inconveniences to have marriages blessed in the public congregations, who can be thought so fit to speak in the congregation and to be the mouth either of the Lord to the people or of the people unto God,⁶⁴² as is the minister?

That which Henry Barrow objects in the 123rd page of his *Discovery*, that he ever took marriage for an ordinance and an action of the Second Table, and sees not why we may not as well set up the tables of the money changers or bring in any other civil matters or chaffare [commerce] as this into our Church, is easily answered: For though marriages be a civil action, yet is not the blessing of it by the Word and prayer civil: And as the magistrates may have a hand in those actions that are ecclesiastical and belonging to the First Table⁶⁴³ (even by Henry Barrow's own confession in the 85th page of the same book), so may the minister have a hand in those actions that are civil and belonging to the Second Table.⁶⁴⁴ And though marriages receive life and being from the contract that is made by mutual consent of parties and parents privately⁶⁴⁵ (which is the cause why we do thereupon, according to the Scriptures, account them man and wife before they have lain together), yet does this add much to the seemliness and beauty of that holy ordinance, when it is thus made known and rightly ratified in the congregation.

Concerning churching of women, we answer: That many of our ministers do upon a just dislike of the form prescribed in the book⁶⁴⁶ and upon fear of nourishing the great superstition that the people for the most part have put in that custom, forbear to use any

⁶⁴² See 'The Minister: the Mouthpiece of God' at 'Responsive Readings in Worship' (RBO) and 'Congregational Prayer, Apart from Necessity, is to be by Ministers' (RBO).

⁶⁴³ See Fentiman, *Circa Sacra*, 'Magistrate may Preside Civilly in Church Assemblies' and 'On the Magistrate's Civil Power Regarding Public Preaching' at 'On the Civil Magistrate's Just Authority for Restraining the Congregating of Citizens...' (RBO), and 'Who May Call Synods & in What Circumstances?' at 'On Council & Synods' (RBO).

⁶⁴⁴ See 'On the Warrant for, & History of a Pastoral Benediction upon the Wedded Couple' at 'Marriage' (RBO) and 'Religious Worship & Ceremonies may be Used in Civil Affairs' at 'On Circumstances' (RBO).

⁶⁴⁵ See 'Settled, Mutual Consent unto the Institution of Marriage by those of Age with Power over Themselves Makes a Couple Married' at 'Marriage' (RBO).

⁶⁴⁶ "The Thanksgiving of Women after Childbirth, commonly called, The Churching of Women" in *The Booke of Common Prayer* (1604).

particular and personal form of thanksgiving at that time and occasion: and yet we see not how it should simply be unlawful (though very inconvenient) to use some form of thanksgiving at that time even with special mention of that occasion, or how our ministry should be made void and Antichristian by doing so. Besides that, the book itself ties no minister to the form prescribed but leaves it to his discretion to use it or any other as that case or occasion requires.

Concerning burials, we answer:

First, that many of our ministers are known to refuse the form of burial prescribed in the book.⁶⁴⁷

Secondly, that a Christian minister may (for the honor and seemliness of Christian burial) accompany, as a Christian, with the rest of the neighbors, the body of Christians departed unto the grave.⁶⁴⁸

Thirdly, if the minister use some few words of comfort and exhortation at that time, yea even in that form that the book prescribes, though it may prove inconvenient and offensive, yet is there no such impiety in that action that should make his ministry void or Antichristian.

Their seventh reason against our office is: That we are called to use Antichristian ceremonies. Whereunto we make this answer:

First, that the ceremonies wherein opinion of holiness is,⁶⁴⁹ or has been put, many of our ministers have cast off, so that this reason makes nothing to justify separation from all our Church assemblies.

⁶⁴⁷ “[The Order for the Burial of the Dead](#)” in *Booke of Common Prayer* (1604).

⁶⁴⁸ This is very similar to the directions given in Westminster’s “[Concerning Burial of the Dead](#)” in the “Directory for the Publick Worship of God”.

⁶⁴⁹ Note the authors’ language only implies some persons (not necessarily the relevant ministers) put an opinion of holiness on these ceremonies, not that the ceremonies were inherently holy or officially regarded as such, nor necessarily that they were commonly held to be holy. That is, partial-conformist ministers in some cases were refusing certain ceremonies that they may have thought were otherwise lawful on the (possibly sole) ground that some persons considered them, or had considered them, holy. In such a case partial non-conformists were refusing otherwise lawful actions if they scandalized some or encouraged some persons in error.

Secondly, many that use sundry of these ceremonies do it because either they judge them things indifferent⁶⁵⁰ and such as whereunto the law of Christian charity⁶⁵¹ and the tender regard to the weakness of the people does (as they think) bind them, following therein the direction of the Word⁶⁵² [Mt. 18:6; Rom. 14:1–2, 13–15; 15:1–2; 1 Cor. 8:11–13; 9:19–22; 10:23–24, 32–33; Gal. 6:2; Phil. 2:3–4; 1 Thess. 5:14; 1 Pet. 3:8], or else they tolerate them as burdens⁶⁵³ [Mt. 23:4; Acts 15:28] which it lies not in them to remove,⁶⁵⁴ being laid upon them by the determination of the magistrate [Neh. 9:37; Prov. 24:21–22; Rom. 13:1–2; 1 Pet. 2:13–15] and custom of the Church [Acts 16:3; Heb. 13:17]. And seeing that they do in judgment and affection unfeignedly dislike⁶⁵⁵ [1 Sam. 8:6–7; 12:17–20; Mt. 23:3–4] that which, either through human infirmity (Rom. 7:15; 2 Chron. 20:33) or in Christian wisdom and to prevent more dangerous inconveniences (Gen. 47:13–27; Mt. 12:1–8; 17:24–27; Acts 16:3; 21:20–26; 1 Cor. 7:26–28), they are enforced to bear with ([Ex. 5:10–12] 1 Kn. 2:5; [1 Cor. 7:20–24]), we see not why they may not be accounted the true ministers of Christ notwithstanding they

⁶⁵⁰ Actions take their species, or kind, from their end: Gillespie, *Dispute*, pt. 3, pp. 152–53; Rutherford, *Divine Right*, Intro, pp. 85–56, 88–89 & ch. 1, p. 150. If the end is not an opinion of holiness, then the material action (if it is not immoral in itself) is in its own nature indifferent, though it be convenient or inconvenient (to whatever degree) due to the action's natural end(s) and circumstances. That such undue or inconvenient actions or circumstances do not necessarily become formal worship or corrupt it as such, see Baxter, *On Worship & Catholicity*, pp. 36–38 & 41–43. That inconvenient material actions or burdensome impurities might be ethically done in a worship service, even in worship itself, see 'Some Impure Worship may be (and even must be) Lawfully, Personally Performed in Some Circumstances for the Inherent Good in it & for Higher, Good Reasons' at 'On Impurities in Worship' (RBO).

⁶⁵¹ See 'On the Original Reasons for the Anglican Ceremonies' at 'On Ceremonies' (RBO).

⁶⁵² See the section above 'The General Rules of the Word'.

⁶⁵³ This is the main thrust of the Westminster divines in the Preface to their "Directory for the Publick Worship of God" in regard to the Anglican Liturgy. The Preface does not describe anything in the Liturgy as inherently sinful, though it does enumerate numerous inconvenient and dangerous tendencies and ill effects of the Liturgy, which they found useful to discard in the process of reformation: "...the Liturgy hath been a great means, as on the one hand to make and increase an idle and unedifying ministry, which contented itself with set forms made to their hands by others, without putting forth themselves to exercise the gift of prayer, with which our Lord Jesus Christ pleaseth to furnish all his servants whom he calls to that office: so, on the other side, it hath been (and ever would be, if continued) a matter of endless strife and contention in the Church, and a snare both to many godly and faithful ministers, who have been persecuted and silenced upon that occasion, and to others of hopeful parts, many of which have been, and more still would be, diverted from all thoughts of the ministry to other studies; especially in these latter times, wherein God vouchsafeth to his people more and better means for the discovery of error and superstition, and for attaining of knowledge in the mysteries of godliness, and gifts in preaching and prayer." That such burdensome things might be ethically done in worship (as the majority of the Westminster divines so practiced), see footnote 649.

⁶⁵⁴ See footnotes 26 & 624 above.

⁶⁵⁵ The factor with greatest weight as to whether an action, not inherently wrong, is sinful or not, is the formal consent (or not) of the will. See 'An Extended Introduction' at 'On the Ethics of Material Cooperation with, & Associations with Evil' (RBO).

use these inconvenient ceremonies, as well as Paul might be judged to be a good Christian though he sometimes did that evil which he hated [[Rom. 7:15](#)] and Jehoshaphat a good king, though he endured the high places to continue in Judah all the time of his government because he was not able to abolish them [[1 Kn. 22:42-43](#); [2 Chron. 20:33](#)], and David though he suffered Joab to live many days after he had committed most unnatural murder [[2 Sam. 3:27](#); [18:14](#); [20:9-10](#); [1 Kn. 2:5](#)], because he was notable, whereas cutting him off would have caused manifest danger to his state [[2 Sam. 3:39](#); [1 Kn. 2:5](#)].

Thirdly, the use of the most unlawful ceremonies that are amongst us⁶⁵⁶ is not of force to make our ministry or our Church void and Antichristian, for the Galatians were still a true Church though they had received even those impotent and beggarly rudiments which they had once cast off ([Gal. 4:9](#)): much more we which cannot be said to have resumed them, as being never yet freed from the bondage of them. So was there still a true Church in Judah when the hill altars and high places were continued there ([2 Kn. 14:4](#)), which yet was a greater corruption in the worship of God than the ceremonies whereof question is made can possibly be accounted.⁶⁵⁷

Fourthly, it is no part of our office whereunto we are in ordination called to use any ceremonies, as has been shown before.

Objection 2

The second thing they object against our ministry is: That the manner of our entrance into the aforesaid office and calling is Antichristian and not according to God's ordinance.

⁶⁵⁶ Perhaps the most objected to ceremony was the minister making the sign of the cross on the forehead of infants in baptism, while reciting the attending words prescribed by the rubric, as this mystical, human ceremony most resembled God's sacraments.

⁶⁵⁷ See [p. 182](#) above.

Answer 2

Whereunto we answer:

First, that the people may lawfully accept us to be true ministers, whom the Church so esteems,⁶⁵⁸ though they cannot see how we first entered, and that by no commandment or example in the Word are they bound to inquire thereinto. For further proof whereof we refer ourselves unto the answer which we have made to their first objection against the whole body of our Church.⁶⁵⁹

Secondly, though none of those rules which Christ's Testament has set down for the calling and ordaining of our ministry can be lacking without a blemish and maim to the calling, and consequently they should all of them be carefully sought for, both by minister and people, yet may some of them be lacking without loss of the life and being of the calling.⁶⁶⁰ Neither is that true which they affirm, that whatsoever minister has not a true and right calling in all points, though the office whereunto he be called be a true office, is no true minister, but an usurper, an intruder, a thief and a murderer. For:

First, whatsoever is of the being and substance of the calling to the ministry has been common to all true and lawful ministers that ever were in the Church, as well as the substance of the sacraments and discipline and whole religion has ever been one and the same in all places and at all times. Whereas it is clear that some of the rules prescribed for the outward calling in the New Testament have not always been in use and practice throughout God's Church,⁶⁶¹ no not in such ministries as the Word has given testimony to. For proof whereof may be alleged the calling that those Levites and preachers exercised whereof there is mention made in [2 Chron. 17:7-9](#).

For as in diverse other parts of God's service, the omitting and swerving from sundry of God's holy ordinances prescribed in the Word makes not the action

⁶⁵⁸ See 'The Implicit or Tacit Consent of Church Governors is Sufficient for the Power of Being an Office-Bearer' at 'On an Extraordinary Calling' (RBO).

⁶⁵⁹ See pp. 216-21 above.

⁶⁶⁰ See 'That Persons who enter Church Office in a Deficient Way, or by Corruption, with the Standing Consent of the Rest of the Church Governors, is Valid' at 'Church Government' (RBO).

⁶⁶¹ See 'On an Extraordinary Calling' (RBO).

itself void and unlawful (as is evident by that one example, [2 Chron. 30:16–19](#)),⁶⁶² so the lack and swerving from some rules prescribed for the outward calling of the ministers cannot be of force sufficient to make their calling void and unlawful.⁶⁶³

Thirdly, though our entrance were according to some of Antichrist's canons,⁶⁶⁴ yet would not that prove that our ministry is Antichristian. For further proof whereof we refer ourselves to that answer we have made to the fourth objection against the whole body of our Church.⁶⁶⁵

Their first reason against our entrance is: That we are not chosen by that people over whom we are set or approved by an eldership. Whereunto we give this answer:

First, that there be sundry of our ministers in our Church that have been in times past chosen by a faithful people and ordained by a true eldership to the work of the ministry, as at Antwerp, Geneva, Middleburg, Flushing, Stoade, Gernsey. Against who, if this be objected that they were not thus called to any of our parish assemblies? We desire to know by what warrant they can be accounted to be no ministers now who have given no just cause of deprivation since the time they were so sufficiently called to the ministry.

Secondly, the most of such preachers as have stood for the cause of reformation⁶⁶⁶ have the very same outward election and ordination in substance which the Word prescribes, for:

⁶⁶² See 'Ordinances of Worship with Impurities in them are Valid', 'That Persons or Whole Churches Omitting Parts of Worship (whether Personal, Family or Public) due to Necessary Factors (including Providential & for Reformation) may be Acceptable to God', 'Some Impure Worship may be (and even must be) Lawfully, Personally Performed in Some Circumstances for the Inherent Good in it & for Higher, Good Reasons' and 'God may Graciously Accept Impure Obedience & Worship' at 'On Impurities in Worship' (RBO).

⁶⁶³ See 'Church's Implicit Consent: Sufficient for Officers', 'Church-Governors' Implicit Consent: Sufficient for Officers', 'Extraordinary Circumstances: God May Supply Call & Ordination' and 'People's Consent: Not Necessary in Extraordinary Circumstances' at 'On an Extraordinary Calling' (RBO). It is not claimed here that such irregularities are justified in ordinary circumstances, but it is claimed that such regularities are not of the essence of the office, and one may have the office without them, as demonstrated in the links.

⁶⁶⁴ Some of the canons of the Anglican Church at the Reformation were inherited from the Middle Ages, and need not be illicit as distinctively Romanist or antichristian.

⁶⁶⁵ On [pp. 230–33](#) above.

⁶⁶⁶ Note they do not speak of Anglican ministers which have not stood for the cause of reformation.

First, there are before their entrance sufficient means used to know and find what gifts are in them by disputations and other exercises in divinity.

Secondly, their gifts are approved by the judgment of sundry learned men of the colleges and places wherein and whereabout they have been trained up.

Thirdly, the faithful that are in those congregations where they are placed do either desire them or gladly receive them, or at the least by not taking exception to them, do even by their silence consent to their entrance,⁶⁶⁷ or by submitting themselves willingly to their godly directions in all things and profiting in knowledge and reformation of life by their labors, do manifestly approve of them and set a seal unto their ministry [1 Cor. 9:1-2; 2 Cor. 3:1-3]; whereof this may serve for an evident proof that many assemblies have both made an earnest suit for sundry ministers before their first coming to them, and [even] when they have been molested afterwards.

And seeing that the right that [civil] patrons now have was given them at first by the people's free consent (though ignorantly and unlawfully as we are persuaded),⁶⁶⁸ we see not why the choice that the patron makes may not be accounted the choice of the people, as well as the acts done by the knights and burgesses of the parliament are deemed the acts of the whole commons by whom they were deputed.⁶⁶⁹ It is evident that by the law mentioned, Num. 30:8, that the silence of the husband or parent that testified not his dislike to the vow which he understood was made by his wife or child, made the said vow of as much

⁶⁶⁷ See [footnotes 669-70](#) below.

⁶⁶⁸ On the issue of patronage (of civil patrons either choosing or otherwise limiting the calling of Church-ministers to congregations) and its history, see '[Patronage](#)' (RBO).

⁶⁶⁹ This argument looks over the fact that some civil citizens may have been, since that time, justly excommunicated from the Church, hence forfeiting any right they may have had to in part choosing, or even consenting to the installation of a minister. However, in that Anglican context, excommunication (which is not wholly necessary to the Church) was often not practiced, or if it was, it may have been done by the magistrate and also respected civil citizenship (according to an Erastian viewpoint). If the patron represented more than Church persons, he still represented in the relevant respect nearly all the church persons (with the possible exception of foreigners who joined to the church but were not citizens), and hence substantially legally represented the church and their choice or consent. Hence the authors' argument still holds for their context, however not ideal the situation be.

force as if his consent had been requited and given: so it is judged in this case of the people's silence in accepting of their ministers.⁶⁷⁰

Thirdly, the law itself requires that we should have the same election and ordination in substance which the Word of God prescribes, for by the law:

First, none should be made minister but at the same time also be should be appointed to some certain charge.

Secondly, that when any ministers are to be made, there should be knowledge given thereof, and that in so public place and manner that even the people over whom any minister is to be set may know it and be admitted to take any just exception they can either to his doctrine or life.

Thirdly, there may be some entrance into the ministry in substance sufficient where the people at first have not made election, nor their consent been required at all: as in case where the people have not knowledge of their right, or having known it, have not been suffered to use it, but yet have afterwards yielded

⁶⁷⁰ Johann H. Alsted (citing [Neh. 8:7](#)), Ames, Gillespie, Rutherford, the London presbyterians (citing David Pareus) and Bairdie likewise rightly taught that a permissive, implicit consent, in elections or otherwise, whether temporally concurrent or even possibly *ex post facto*, seals agreements: Alsted, *Lexicon Theologicum*... (Prostat, 1612), ch. 15, 'De suffragiis', p. 380; Gillespie, *A Treatise of Miscellaneous Questions* (1649), ch. 2, p. 4 in *The Presbyterian's Armoury* (Edinburgh: Ogle, 1846), vol. 2; *An Assertion of the Government of the Church of Scotland*... (Edinburgh: Bryson, 1641), pt. 2, ch. 1, p. 120; Rutherford, *Lex, Rex, or the Law & the Prince* (Edinburgh: Ogle, Oliver & Boyd, 1843), pp. 2-3, 35, 37, 47, 188; *Due Right*, pt. 1, ch. 8, p. 207; pt. 2, ch. 5, p. 272; *A Survey of the Survey of that Sum of Church Discipline Penned by Mr. Thomas Hooker*... (London, 1658), bk. 2, ch. 9, pp. 257, 259; bk. 3, ch. 3, p. 307.

London Presbyterians: "most of them [Anglican churches] have had an after consent [of the people to the minister], which was sufficient to make Leah Jacob's wife (*Subsequens consensus Jacobi in Leam, fecit eos conjuges* ["The subsequent consent of Jacob to Leah made them married persons"]; Pareus, etc.), and why not (to use your own words) to marry a man to a people; and therefore according to your own [congregationalist] judgments, all such are lawful ministers." *Vindication of Presbyterian Government*, p. 123.

Bairdie: "it being all one to them (as to the validity of their call) whether the people's election was antecedent or subsequent to the ruler's license: See [William] Ames, *Cases of Conscience*, bk. 4, ch. 25, [thesis 29](#). Yea, divines tell us that people's consent subsequent to a minister's entry (though it absolve him not of disorderliness, yet) does ratify and make good his right to labor among them as their pastor, even as Leah (unjustly obtruded upon Jacob) did by his consequent consent become his wife; and might no more after that be repudiated than his beloved Rachel, whom he chose before he married her [[Gen. 29:16-32](#)]."

"That solemnity therefore of [ministerial] admission [to a charge] (so called) being at most, and in best times, not necessary *ad esse* [to the being], but only expedient *ad bene esse* [to the well-being], that is to say, not essential and absolutely necessary, but only for solemnity and conveniency of stating the relation (as learned Voetius shows in his *Desperata causa Papatus*, [§2, ch. 20, 'The Election to be Given to a Minister'] p. 263). What hinders but it may be wanted [lacked] without any detriment to the relation? like marriage consummate without some of the rites and solemnities, ordinary and fit when they may be had." [Balm from Gilead](#), pp. 111-12 & 114-15.

themselves subject thereunto,⁶⁷¹ as also in the case aforesaid, [Num. 30:8](#). For further proof whereof, we refer ourselves to the answer we have given unto that which they object in general against our entrance.⁶⁷²

Fourthly, concerning ordination by eldership, this we answer in particular: First, that unless the eldership be held so essential a thing that there can be no true Church without it (which we are well assured of that our brethren themselves and all that have any knowledge will deny),⁶⁷³ ordination by the eldership cannot be absolutely necessary,⁶⁷⁴ albeit in the settled government of a Church we hold it of the essence of the calling of a minister that we have the substance of the ordination appointed in the Word.⁶⁷⁵

Fifthly, [second,] that as in times past, so now also there may be in some places such an estate of the Church as wherein no manner of ordination and investing of ministers has been or could be used in the giving of an entrance into the ministry: and though where it may be conveniently had, we hold it fit that the weakness of the people's judgment in their choice of their minister should be supported by the discreet knowledge of the ministers and elders that are about them. Yet where it cannot be conveniently had (as in places where the Gospel is newly planted and far removed from other Churches already established), there, that (amongst other considerations) the course of the Gospel should not be stayed till ordination be

⁶⁷¹ That an *ex post facto* consent may legitimize a relationship, agreement or authority, see the previous footnote and Rutherford: "This title by conquest, through the people's after consent, may be turned into a just title, as in the case of the Jews in Caesar's time, for which cause our Savior commanded to obey Caesar, and to pay tribute unto him... 2. Though the consent be some way over-awed [by intimidation], yet is it a sort of contract and covenant of loyal subjection made to the conqueror, and therefore sufficient to make the title just; otherwise, if the people never give their consent, the conqueror, domineering over them by violence, has no just title to the crown." *Lex, Rex*, p. 47.

⁶⁷² On pp. 253–62 above.

⁶⁷³ See 'Church Government is Not Necessary to the Visible Church, but is for its Well-Being' at 'The Church' (RBO).

⁶⁷⁴ See 'Church's Implicit Consent: Sufficient for Officers', 'Church-Governors' Implicit Consent: Sufficient for Officers' and 'Extraordinary Circumstances: God May Supply Call & Ordination' at 'On an Extraordinary Calling' (RBO).

⁶⁷⁵ The reformed often did not allow for an extraordinary calling in a settled, ordinary state of the Church: 'Extraordinary Practices are Not Justified in Ordinary Circumstances' at 'On an Extraordinary Calling' (RBO). However a deficient settled state of the Church, where a proper ordination cannot be had, ought to be distinguished, such that, as is argued, one having the substance of the ordination appointed in the Word, and therefore a minister's essence, may be a publicly and ecclesiastically recognized minister.

fetched from far countries,⁶⁷⁶ the Lord himself oftentimes supplies the places of the ministers and elders and lays on his hands⁶⁷⁷ such evidence of gifts and graces proper for the ministry as not only the Church does willingly acknowledge, but the enemies also, will they or nill they, are in their consciences convinced to be divine and excellent. And seeing it is evident that neither the prophets under the law, nor many worthy ministers that God has raised up since the time of the Gospel, had ever, before their entrance into the ministry, their gifts solemnly approved or been ordained. [Judg. 4:4–5; 1 Sam. 3:1–4; 2 Kn. 22:14; Jer. 1:1–10; Jon. 1:1–2; Amos 7:14–15; Mt. 21:23–27; Mk. 9:38–40; Lk. 9:49–50; Jn. 1:19–28; Acts 8:4; 9:10, 17–18; 11:19–21, 25–28 with 13:1–2; 18:24–26; 1 Cor. 14:29–31]

Our brethren must needs grant that this kind of ordination [that they require] is not simply or absolutely necessary to the being of a minister. To which also this may be added:

First, that our Savior in giving notice whereby the true pastor should be discerned from the false, names only these, viz. that he enter himself and lead the people in and out by that door. [Jn. 10:9]

Secondly, that the people of God agree with him and consent to his ministry.⁶⁷⁸ [Mt. 10:40–41; Mk. 9:37–39; Acts 18:24–26; Gal. 2:9; 1 Thess. 2:13].

Thirdly, that the porter (the Holy Ghost) open the hearts of the hearers to him and his doctrine. [Acts 8:14–17; 16:14; 2 Cor. 3:1–3; 1 Thess. 2:13]

Which three notes doubtless our Savior would not have rested in [Mt. 21:23–27] if there could have been no true minister without the ordination which our brethren speak of and urge as a matter of absolute necessity. So that to conclude this point, we say that the ordinary course of entering into the ministry is not kept, but a great imperfection and lack is to be acknowledged where this election and ordination is

⁶⁷⁶ See 'It may be Better to Minister with Extraordinary Gifts than to Wait for Regular Order in Some Circumstances' at 'On an Extraordinary Calling' (RBO).

⁶⁷⁷ See 'In Extraordinary Circumstances, God May Supply the Call & Power of Ordination' at 'On an Extraordinary Calling' (RBO).

⁶⁷⁸ See 'Church's Implicit Consent: Sufficient for Officers' and 'Church-Governors' Implicit Consent: Sufficient for Officers' at 'On Extraordinary Calling' (RBO).

not used, yet is not the lack such as takes away the very life and being of a true ministry.⁶⁷⁹

Their second reason against our entrance is: That our ordination is received from Antichristian prelates and such, as being persecutors of the godly, cannot be well accounted brethren or members of the Church,⁶⁸⁰ much less can they give a calling to a minister of the Church. Whereunto we answer:

First, that the bishops of England cannot truly be called Antichristian prelates; for proof whereof we refer ourselves unto that answer we have given unto their fourth objection against the whole body of our Church.⁶⁸¹

Secondly, seeing it cannot be denied that the bishops are able to judge of such gifts as are required for the sufficiency of ministers, yea that many of them have been such ministers⁶⁸² themselves as to whose labors the Lord has set to his seal [1 Cor. 9:1-2; 2 Cor. 3:1-3] and who have also suffered persecution for the truth,⁶⁸³ we are persuaded that (though it were not necessary, yet) it cannot be unlawful for him that enters into the ministry to be approved and authorized even by them.⁶⁸⁴

Thirdly, if our ordination be in this behalf faulty, how will our brethren justify the calling of their own ministers that have received ordination ever from the people,⁶⁸⁵ who neither by commandment, nor example, can be found to have any such authority, nor are in any degree so capable of it as the bishops.

⁶⁷⁹ See 'That Persons who enter Church Office in a Deficient Way, or by Corruption, with the Standing Consent of the Rest of the Church Governors, is Valid' at 'Church Government' (RBO).

⁶⁸⁰ See 'That Scandalous Persons are not Excommunicated until they are Actually Excommunicated by those with the Power of the Keys, Though We Ought Not to have Personal Fellowship with Them' at 'On Excommunication' (RBO).

⁶⁸¹ See pp. 230-33 above.

⁶⁸² See 'That Episcopal Bishops & Prelates are Unlawful but Valid Gospel Ministers' at 'On Prelacy & Episcopacy' (RBO).

⁶⁸³ The most obvious examples of this were bishops being martyred under Bloody Mary, but see also, for example, the many (effective) labors for Reformation through much difficulty of bishop Richard Cox (who had opposed John Knox in Frankfurt): Wenig, "Reformation during the Episcopate of Richard Cox".

⁶⁸⁴ See 'Though a Single Bishop has No Rightful Power of Himself to Ordain, yet the Church's Ordination may be Received by a Bishop' at 'On Prelacy & Episcopacy' (RBO).

⁶⁸⁵ Ordination from lay-persons might be justified in extraordinary circumstances, but not in ordinary circumstances where a more proper ordination might be had. See 'Who has the Power to Ordain?' at 'Ordination' (RBO) and 'The Implicit or Tacit Consent of the Church (Laypersons and/or Officers) is Sufficient for the Call Between the Church & the Officer' at 'On an Extraordinary Calling'.

Fourthly, the ordination we seek for from the bishops is not theirs, but committed to the Church⁶⁸⁶ by Christ Himself. And seeing we have already proved that there was in England a true Church even then when this authority was first given by parliament⁶⁸⁷ to the bishops, and that the true Church (which, without a ministry, cannot possibly be continued) is never without power to ordain ministers,⁶⁸⁸ we may lawfully reverence and seek for the benefit of this power and privilege which God has given to his Church, though it were conveyed unto us by men less capable of this authority than our bishops are. And he that thinks Christ's ordination the better for the man that bestows it, incurs (as we think) the danger of the curse denounced against him that puts his trust in man and makes flesh his arm and withdraws his heart from the Lord, [Jer. 17:5](#).

Fifthly, if our bishops were not at all capable of this power to give ecclesiastical ordination, yet seeing the Christian magistrate's approbation is not to be refused by him that exercises a ministry in the Church, and that cannot be had in our Church but by the hands of the bishops, we think that he who is fitted of God to the ministry and has also testimony of his fitness from such godly learned brethren as have made trial of his gifts and can judge of them, may lawfully accept and seek for this kind of [civil] approbation⁶⁸⁹ if all other conditions be equal.

⁶⁸⁶ While Rutherford preferred a slightly different paradigm on this point (that the power for ordination resides in the Church guides themselves, and that from Christ, in a way, immediately), yet Rutherford acknowledges this understanding (of the authors) was common amongst the reformed and the early Church, and he is sympathetic to it. It might be argued the difference is conceptual and verbal rather than material. The conclusions of the authors could be reached on Rutherford's paradigm as well. Rutherford himself gives the power of the keys to the whole Church of believers in numerous senses. Rutherford: "The office bearers of the Church have the power of the keys and their office immediately from Christ, by the immediation of free gift: they have their offices from the Church by the mediation of orderly designation, seeing it is the Church which designs such a man to such an office..." *A Peaceable & Temperate Plea for Paul's Presbytery in Scotland* (London, 1642), [ch. 1](#), p. 7. See pp. 1-7, esp. pp. 2 & 5.

⁶⁸⁷ Though the Erastianism of the English context makes the issues more difficult, yet the great virtue of our authors lies in their ability to rightly, accurately and faithfully splice the issues nonetheless in consistency with true catholicity and their presbyterian convictions. While parliament had no formal civil power to delegate the power of ecclesiastical ordination to bishops, yet the parliament men were materially Christians who were representatives of the rest of the Christian populace, or Church in England, and the Church can, through representatives (though the specifics be by positive and not divine law), so consent and concur to the ordination of persons deemed worthy thereof by ministers who are bishops, as will be further argued.

⁶⁸⁸ See 'The Implicit or Tacit Consent of the Church (Laypersons and/or Officers) is Sufficient for the Call Between the Church & the Officer' and 'On the Question of Presbyterial Succession' at 'On an Extraordinary Calling' (RBO).

⁶⁸⁹ See 'On Material Cooperation with Bishops' at 'On Prelacy & Episcopacy' (RBO).

Sixthly, admit the bishops from whom we receive our ordination⁶⁹⁰ were indeed Antichristian or heretics (as we judge them not to be), yet why should we be bound to seek for any other ordination more than another baptism than that which we have received from Popish priests in the time of ignorance; and seeing that Barrow and Greenwood in the 54th page of their *Refutation* do not only account many to be true Christians that never had other outward baptism than that which they had from Popish priests, but plainly affirm that such neither need, nor ought to be baptized again,⁶⁹¹ we wonder why they dare not account us true ministers because of this ordination received from the bishops. Shall ordination be thought more necessary to the being of a minister than baptism is to the being of a Christian? or shall an error in ordination have more force to prove one no minister than an error in baptism has to prove one no Christian? or are our bishops worse than the Popish priests, or the corruption in the form of our ordination greater than those that are used in popish baptism?

Objection 3

The third thing they object against our ministry is: That the administration and exercise of our function is not agreeable to the Word, but Antichristian, because (say they) at our entrance we swear canonical obedience to the bishops, and so do we perform it in our whole administration by going to their courts, by standing and falling at their commandment.

⁶⁹⁰ See 'Though a Single Bishop has No Rightful Power of Himself to Ordain, yet the Church's Ordination may be Received by a Bishop' at 'On Prelacy & Episcopacy' (RBO).

⁶⁹¹ That Roman baptism is valid, see 'On Romish Baptism' at 'On the Roman Church being a Church, She being Apostate, her Baptism being Valid...' (RBO).

Answer 3

Whereunto we answer:

First, that so long as the Christian magistrate requires we should yield obedience to the bishops (and that with this limitation, viz. only in things lawful and honest), we think it not unlawful for us to give obedience to them in those things they do by civil authority,⁶⁹² though neither themselves nor the magistrate might well require us to do, for even our Savior Himself yielded obedience to Caesar in such a thing wherein Caesar could not lawfully exact obedience of Him.⁶⁹³ ([Mt. 17:24, 27](#))

As for the excommunication and suspensions and such other censures as are merely ecclesiastical, we answer: As the true Church of God [in England], which from the Lord Jesus has received these keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, did (though unadvisedly and unlawfully) deliver them over into the hands of the bishops, and the bishops, being preachers of the Word, though they should not have this power wholly committed unto them, yet are they capable of it:⁶⁹⁴ we see not how it should be utterly unlawful to reverence and yield to the censures of Christ's Church, being exercised and administered even by them, unless we will say that the Church presently loses her right and power to censure offenders when she commits it unto any such men as unto whom of right it belongs either not at all or not of right.

Secondly, now as we may lawfully yield some obedience to the bishops in these things, so we may lawfully bind ourselves by oath to do it⁶⁹⁵ if our oaths be required

⁶⁹² See '[On Material Cooperation with Bishops](#)' at '[On Prelacy & Episcopacy](#)' (RBO). Ames: "There is some authority in the bishops derived from the king which may be acknowledged [as] lawful. Such is this of giving license, liberty and civil authority for men to do good. The civil magistrate may do it himself, or appoint others to do it, [2 Chron. 17:7](#). The abuse of this authority does not make it unlawful." [Second Manuduction](#), pp. 6-7. See '[On Compliance with, or a Tolerable Submission to Practices of Erastianism where Possible or under Necessity](#)' at '[Erastianism](#)' (RBO) and '[May One take an Oath of Allegiance or Otherwise to a Usurper? \[Yes\]](#)' at '[On the Ethics of being under Usurped Powers](#)' (RBO).

⁶⁹³ Yeilding material compliance to an unjust command for a higher good is called "passive obedience". See '[On Passive Obedience](#)' (RBO) and '[We Ought to Refrain from Unnecessarily Scandalizing the Malicious & Giving Them Occasion to Become Worse](#)' at '[On Scandal & Offenses](#)' (RBO). See especially, in argument from the worse to the better, for material conformity to a prevalent and unrivaled usurper at '[On the Ethics of being under Usurped Powers](#)' (RBO), and the section on that page, '[On Serving, or Holding Office under, Prevalent Usurpers](#)'.

⁶⁹⁴ See '[That Episcopal Bishops & Prelates are Unlawful but Valid Gospel Ministers](#)' at '[On Prelacy & Episcopacy](#)' (RBO).

⁶⁹⁵ Zachary Ursinus: "If it be just to do, which thou through constraint hast promised, it is just also for thee to promise by oath to do it. For what we may lawfully do, the same also we may lawfully promise by

of us by the Christian magistrate's authority, especially seeing we do by oath bind ourselves to obey in regard of the civil authority which is committed to them by the Christian magistrate.⁶⁹⁶

Thirdly, for our going to their courts, this we answer: That seeing we do testify in our callings our dislike to the vile and odious corruptions of their courts and do also utterly refuse to yield obedience to any of their unlawful decrees, we cannot justly be condemned for appearing in their courts or any other place whereunto we are by his Majesty's [King James I's] authority summoned.⁶⁹⁷ [1 Sam. 22:11-12] And whereas the persons before whom we appear are judged usually corrupt and enemies to that

an oath to do. As, if a man falling into the hands of a thief, should be required by the thief to give a piece of money for the redeeming of his life; verily he not only may, but also ought, if he be able, to perform that which the thief requires. And if this be lawfully performed unto a thief, it is lawfully also performed unto him by an oath." *The Sum of Christian Religion...* tr. Henrie Parrie (Oxford, 1587), 3rd Commandment, 4. 'Whether all oaths are to be kept', p. 919.

⁶⁹⁶ That ecclesiastical persons can be capable of lawfully delegated civil authority is seen in Scripture, not only in Moses, *Ex. 18*, and Samuel, *1 Sam. 7:15-17* (being delegated such immediately by God), but also in Artaxerxes so commissioning the priest Ezra in *Ezra 7:25-26*. While these were extraordinary actions, yet if civil authority be so delegated in situations which don't sufficiently warrant such, yet this impropriety does not of itself make the recipients incapable of bearing such authority, or the action to be necessarily wholly invalid.

Gillespie quotes Francis Junius as saying: "For both the Church, when the joining of the magistrate fails, may extraordinarily do something which ordinarily she cannot [*1 Sam. 15:32-33; Ezra 7:21, 23, 25*]; and again, when the Church fails of her duty, the magistrate may extraordinarily procure that the Church return to her duty: that is, in such a case extraordinarily happening, these (ecclesiastical persons) and those (magistrates) may extraordinarily do something, which ordinarily they cannot. For this belongs to common law and equity, that unto extraordinary evils, extraordinary remedies must also be applied." Gillespie, *Dispute*, pt. 3, *ch. 8*, p. 124. This quote of Junius is also quoted by Rutherford, who said, "I ever judged it a golden saying of that great divine Francis Junius..." *Divine Right*, *ch. 21*, pp. 481-82. Junius, *Animadversions in Robert Bellarmine*, 4th Controversy, bk. 1, *chs. 12* (section 18, p. 1,038 rt. col.) & *18* (pp. 1,052-54) in *The Theological Works* (Geneva, 1607).

Bairdie, speaking of the just authority of king Charles I, as conjoined with his claimed ecclesiastical supremacy: "Being in itself lawful, does its neighborhood (*in eodem subjecto* [in the same subject]) with what is counted unlawful, defile it? Does the accession or conjunction of an incompetent power, nullify or corrupt the whole system of the regal authority? And consequently, even that just power which did without controversy belong to the Crown before that unjust superaddition? And that, to such a degree, as neither he may exerce, nor ye make use (without sin) of the effluxes of the just power, till first he disclaim and lay by the addition of what is undue? How irrational were this? For as lawyers tell, *Accedente injustitia, non decedit, nec corrumpitur justa potestas* [With the joining of injustice, just power does not fall, nor is corrupted]. For example, a husband, father, or master, usurping the power of a magistrate or minister, does he therefore lose and fall from his marital, paternal or masterly authority? Or is it a sin in the wife, son or servant to submit unto or make use of the exercise of the one, while he does not disclaim the other?" *Balm from Gilead*, pp. 62-63. See also pp. 232-33 with footnotes 620-22.

⁶⁹⁷ If according to the Word and *circa sacra* the magistrate has civil authority to civilly discipline ministers deviating in their calling and from the received order of the Church, causing undue civil disturbances, then the magistrate has authority to summon ministers on that account. See Fentiman, "The Duty to Civilly Restrain Sects & Public, False Teachers in an Established Land" in *Circa Sacra*, pp. 66-72.

reformation which we desire, and some of them also, as being no ministers themselves, do by all means seek the disgrace of our calling and the utter discouragement of such Christians as in whom they perceive any sparks of true zeal, we account our appealing at their courts⁶⁹⁸ [to be] not only an abridgment of our liberty, but also as such a burden as we have just cause to groan under and to pray that God would in his good time move his Majesty's heart to ease us of it. And yet as the apostle, being free, was content for the Church's sake not only to become bound in serving it with the labor of his hands [[Acts 18:3–4](#); [1 Cor. 9:12](#); [1 Thess. 2:9](#); [2 Thess. 3:7–9](#)], but also by subjecting himself to those ceremonies which in Christ were abolished [[Acts 16:3](#); [18:21](#); [20:16](#); [21:20–26](#)], so may and ought we for the Church's sake to bear this burden [[1 Cor. 9:20–22](#); [Gal. 6:2](#)] rather than to forsake or refuse the ministry when the Lord has called and fitted us unto it.

For our yielding to the suspensions and deprivations, we answer: That so long as the bishops suspend and deprive according to the law of the land, we account of the action herein as of the act of the Church, which we may and ought to reverence and yield unto.⁶⁹⁹ If they do otherwise, we have liberty given us by the law to appeal from them.⁷⁰⁰

If it be said that the Church is not to be obeyed when it suspends and deprives us for such causes as we in our consciences know to be insufficient, we answer: That it lies in them to depose that may ordain, and they may shut that may open.⁷⁰¹ And that as

⁶⁹⁸ In argument from the worse to the better, see 'That a Person may Petition Prevailing Usurpers, calling them by their Usurped Titles if need be, for things Just, Needful, Good & True' at 'On the Ethics of being under Usurped Powers' (RBO).

⁶⁹⁹ This is a very strong statement on submissively tolerating possibly acutely unjust judgments within the jurisdiction of a lawful authority, or of "passive obedience". The fullest defense of such I have found is by the Scottish Resolutioner ministers James Wood and George Hutcheson, the latter being later a leader of the indulged ministers: [A Review & Examination of a Pamphlet Lately Published bearing the Title of Protesters No Subverters & Presbytery No Papacy](#), etc. (Edinburgh, 1659), especially pp. 80–139. Whatever might be said for or against the principle in more free contexts, the lawfulness of walking according to the principle in contexts of great necessity is undoubted.

⁷⁰⁰ See 'That a Person may Petition Prevailing Usurpers, calling them by their Usurped Titles if need be, for things Just, Needful, Good & True' at 'On the Ethics of being under Usurped Powers' (RBO).

⁷⁰¹ However prudent it may be in certain circumstances to defer even to erroneous public authority, this argument does not conclusively hold so far as authorities only have authority from God formally for good, and none for ill. See 'All Authority Given of God is Only unto Good, Truth & Edification, & None Unto Error & the Detriment of People' at 'On Passive Obedience' (RBO) and 'How Church Rulings Do & Do Not Bind, on Guilt & Innocence in Breaking Them, & on Contumacy' (RBO). However, as God-given authority resides in those material officers, a subjection is yet owed to them more than to private persons.

he may with a good conscience execute a ministry by the ordination and calling of the Church who is privy to himself of some unfitness⁷⁰² (if the Church will press him to it), so may he who is privy to himself of no fault that deserves deprivation cease from the execution of his ministry when he is pressed thereunto by the Church.⁷⁰³ And if a guiltless person put out of his charge by the Church's authority may yet continue in it,⁷⁰⁴ what proceedings can there be against guilty persons who in their own conceit are always guiltless, or will at least pretend so to be, seeing they also will be ready always to object against the Church's judgment that they are called of God and may not therefore give over the execution of their ministry at the will of man.⁷⁰⁵

And yet admitting it were merely unlawful upon any respect to yield any new obedience⁷⁰⁶ at all to the censures of the bishops, yet how will it follow that this our

On this delicate balance, on subjection when authorities grievously err, consider Bairdie's quote in [footnote 306](#) above.

⁷⁰² That the marks that elders are to have in 1 Tim. 3 are not absolute requirements as to the validity of their office, or in entering therein, see '[On the Qualifications of 1 Tim. 3 & the Good Order of the Church](#)' at 'Pastors' (RBO).

⁷⁰³ When [Philip Henry](#) (†1696), the father of [Matthew Henry](#), with around two thousand puritans, was barred from the ministry in the Anglican Church's [Great Ejection](#) of 1662, he, along with "all the sober nonconformists generally in those parts," chose to refrain from publicly preaching and to materially submit to the unjust discipline for the sake of public order and the persuasiveness of a meek and peaceable spirit (1 Pet. 3:4) till the unjust sentence could be removed (which it finally was) when persons at large would come to a better mind about it, citing four historic, English, Post-Reformation precedents: ed. J.B. Williams, *The Lives of Philip & Matthew Henry, Two Volumes in One* (Banner of Truth, 1974), pp. 101–5. See also '[An Extended Introduction](#)' at '[On the Ethics of Material Cooperation with, & Associations with Evil](#)' (RBO) and '[Should an Unjustly Deposed or Silenced Minister continue to Preach?](#)' at '[How Church Rulings Do & Do Not Bind, on Guilt & Innocence in Breaking Them, & on Contumacy](#)' (RBO).

⁷⁰⁴ [Edward Stillingfleet](#) (1635–1699) quoted this work of the authors to prove that preaching, when prohibited by the established laws, was contrary to the doctrine of all the old non-conformists. The son of William Rathband, also named William Rathband, wrote in a letter to Baxter, "That his father was not to be reckoned among those who held that sentiment, since he exercised his ministry, though contrary to law, for many years at a chapel in Lancashire; and after he was silenced he preached in private, as he had opportunity, and the times would bear, of which I myself was sometimes a witness. Afterwards, upon the invitation of a gentleman, he exercised his ministry at Belcham in Northumberland, for about a year; and from thence he removed to Ovingham, in the same county, where he preached about a year; till, being silenced there, he retired into a private family." Benjamin Brook, *The Lives of the Puritans*, 3 vols. (London: Black, 1813), vol. 2, pp. 470–71.

⁷⁰⁵ The answer to this rhetorical question, in a Christian, civilly established land (as England was, and as they often did) is that the magistrate ought to uphold the just sentences of the Church and may civilly proceed against the offender with physical coercion. See pp. 49–50 & 107 of Fentiman, [Circa Sacra](#). Where the magistrate, who has the authority for physical coercion, will not uphold the Church's discipline, the posed issue will always be a practical problem.

⁷⁰⁶ "New obedience" sets forth the issue most acutely. Persons might more readily submit to already enacted judgments, but the issue here is of not simply refraining from counteracting and submitting, but positively, materially obeying new, not wholly just judgments, as they are set forth. For more relevant

unlawful yielding has sufficient force to make us (*ipso facto*) no true ministers, unless you will say that the high priests who were in Christ's time that took and left their offices at the will of tyrants and heathen princes were therefore not to be accounted priests?⁷⁰⁷ For further answer hereunto we refer the reader to that which we have above said to the fourth thing which they object against the whole body of our assemblies,⁷⁰⁸ and to that also which we have already answered unto the fourth reason which they bring against our office.⁷⁰⁹

It may easily appear how unskillfully the speech of the apostles is alleged ([Acts 4:19–20](#), “Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God”), which they are wont to object against us in this case, to them that will consider these three differences between their case and ours ([1 Tim. 6:2](#)):

First, they that inhibited the apostles were known and professed enemies to the Gospel. [[Acts 4:1–3](#)]

Secondly, the apostles were charged not to teach in the name of Christ, nor to publish any part of the doctrine of the Gospel [[Acts 4:18](#)], which commandment might more hardly be yielded unto than this of our bishops, who though they cannot endure them which teach that part of the truth concerning the good government and reformation of the Church, yet are they not only content that the Gospel should be preached, but are also preachers of it themselves.

Thirdly, the apostles received not their calling and authority from men ([[Mt. 4:18–22](#); [Lk. 5:1–11](#)]; [Gal. 1:1](#)), nor by the hands of men, but immediately from God Himself, and therefore also might not be restrained or deposed by men; whereas we, though we exercise a function whereof God is the author, and we are also called of God to it, yet are we called and ordained by the hand and ministry of

material on a related issue (in argument from the worse to the better), see ‘[On Conforming to Prevalent & Unrivaled Usurpers Sooner rather than Later](#)’ at ‘On the Ethics of being under Usurped Powers’ (RBO).

⁷⁰⁷ The high priests were to serve for life ([Lev. 16:32](#); [Num. 20:25–28](#); [35:25](#)) and yet were not doing this in Christ's time ([Lk. 3:2](#); [Jn. 18:13](#); [Acts 4:6](#)) due to the will and civil impositions of heathen governors (Josephus, *Antiquities*, bk. 18, ch. 2, §§1–2; ch. 4, §3; ch. 5, §3; bk. 20, ch. 1, §3; ch. 5, §2; ch. 8, §§5, 8, 11; ch. 9, §§1–4, 7; ch. 10; *Jewish War*, bk. 4, ch. 3, §6; ch. 4, §4). Yet they were still considered by Scripture and the apostle Paul to be valid high priests ([Mt. 26:3, 58](#); [Lk. 3:2](#); [Jn. 11:49](#); [18:13, 24](#); [Acts 5:17](#); [7:1](#); [22:5](#); especially [23:2–5](#) with Josephus, *Antiquities* 20.5.2 & *War* 2.12.6), as they fulfilled a significant portion of God's ordinance and had the will of the people.

⁷⁰⁸ On pp. 230–33 above.

⁷⁰⁹ On pp. 268–75 above.

men, and may therefore by men be also deposed and restrained from the exercise of our ministry. [1 Kn. 2:26–27]

Objection 4

The fourth objection against our ministry is: That we are not maintained according to the direction Christ has given in his Testament, but our maintenance is Jewish and Antichristian. That this is a principal matter objected against our ministry appears in the [fourth page](#) of their *Collection of Letters and Conferences* and sundry other parts of their writings. And lest they should seem to say it only, they bring sundry reasons to prove that our maintenance is such as no minister of Christ can accept or live by, for say they our ministers receive maintenance from all sorts of men in their parish without difference. This is alleged in their *Collection of Letters*, [page 18](#) and called in the [145th page](#) of the *Refutation* an execrable sacrilege and covetous making merchandise of the holy things of God, a letting out of ourselves for hire to the profane for filthy lucre.

Answer 4

To this first reason they bring against our maintenance, this answer we give:

First, that the Christian magistrate is bound to use his authority for the furtherance of the subjects in all things that concern godliness and honesty [1 Tim. 2:2], and so see that the moral Law be kept by them. [Rom. 13:3–4] Whereas therefore the Christian magistrate (in conscience of his duty [1 Chron. 29:3–5; 2 Chron. 2:11–12, 16; 17:7–9; 24:8–10; Ezra 1:2–4; 6:4–5, 8–10; 7:21–23; Neh. 2:7–9; Hag. 1:14–15; Mt. 2:1, 11; Lk. 7:4–5]) has provided by the law that all his subjects should (of the increase God gives them) contribute somewhat towards the maintenance of their minister,⁷¹⁰ we

⁷¹⁰ The means of collecting maintenance for the ministry was commonly held to be indifferent (though it ought to be expedient) in the Post-Reformation, and held to be lawfully done through the taxing of the magistrate in a professed-Christian land. See the resources at '[Tithes & Offerings](#)' (RBO), and the articles by John Owen for a representative view and argument similar to what is here presented.

may truly be said to receive our maintenance rather from the magistrate than from the people.

Secondly, the magistrate may lawfully appoint so much of the subjects' goods (as by law is given to the ministers' maintenance) to be employed to this or any other good use [[Rom. 13:4](#)], as is evident by that, which the apostle says, [Rom. 13:7](#).

Thirdly, the magistrate may without any show of wrong compel the subjects to pay this part of their goods which they give to their minister, because in parliament it was voluntarily bestowed, even by the people themselves, whose free act that is to be accounted which is enacted and done in parliament. [[1 Chron. 29:6-9](#)]

Fourthly, it is evident by the Word that the offerings which heathens voluntarily brought and gave to the building and beautifying of the Temple were accepted of, as appears in the stories. ([Ezr. 1:4-6](#); [[6:4-5](#), [8-10](#); [Neh. 2:7-9](#)])

Fifthly, seeing the apostle calls it our own bread ([2 Thess. 3:12](#)) we get by our honest labors ([Eph. 4:28](#)), and our Savior says in this case that the laborer is worthy of his hire ([Lk. 10:7](#)), we may with comfort and good conscience take maintenance of the wicked that live in our parishes [[Gen. 12:16](#); [Ex. 12:35-36](#); [Ezra 6:8-10](#); [Acts 28:1-2](#), [7-10](#)], for whose sake, both publicly and privately, we take pains, and to whom the benefit of our labor is offered, seeing that the apostle avouches that such as sow spiritual things amongst people (though God bless not their seed) may lawfully and honestly reap their carnal things ([1 Cor. 9:11](#)).

Sixthly, as for the testimony of the holy Scriptures which our brethren allege in this point, we give this answer unto them:

To the place [Lev. 22:25](#) ["Neither from a stranger's hand shall ye offer the bread of your God of any of these, because their corruption is in them and blemishes be in them: they shall not be accepted for you"], we answer:

First, that the meaning is that a stranger, being a proselyte, might no more lawfully offer any of these unclean and imperfect sacrifices spoken of in the verses going before [[v. 20](#), "But whatsoever hath a blemish, that shall ye not offer"] than a Jew might.

Secondly, if the unbelieving stranger were meant here, yet is there nothing spoken here of the maintenance which should come to the priests, for the

intent of the Law in this place is to show what manner of sacrifices should be offered to the Lord and not what maintenance priests should have, which is evident both in that the sacrifice is here called the bread of their God [v. 25] and also in that elsewhere the priests might receive maintenance which might have a blemish, as in the firstfruits and firstborn offerings [Num. 18:13–15; Dt. 15:19–22; 18:3–4].⁷¹¹

To that place Prov. 15:8 [“The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord,”] and all such like, we answer:

First, that though the action there spoken of (for the substance thereof) be good and lawful, yet as it comes from them whose hearts are not purged by faith, it is indeed abominable in God's sight, as all the other actions of the wicked are. [Prov. 21:4]

Secondly, that they abuse this place, for it is there meant of the spiritual services of God [Prov. 15:8b] and not of corporal maintenance; and lastly, if it were to be understood of the maintenance of the minister, yet should not the minister sin in taking it because they sin in giving it, because by the Law it was provided that all Jews, clean or unclean, good or bad, should pay tithes without exception [Lev. 27:30; Num. 18:24, 26; Dt. 14:22].

To the place Phil 4:18 [“...having received... the things which were sent from you, an odor of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God], we answer:

First, that he speaks not there of maintenance due to the ministry, but of the contribution made to the afflicted saints and to himself in particular [Phil. 4:15–16], that had a principal portion in the sufferings of the saints. [Phil. 4:14]

Secondly, if they urge that the maintenance of the minister is also an odor that smells sweet and a sacrifice acceptable to God, which nothing that

⁷¹¹ While these verses do not explicitly say blemishes may be in the food and animals given to the priests, yet the many times repeated prohibition of not offering blemished things to the Lord (e.g. Lev. 22:21–22) is not spoken of in regard to the priest's maintenance, and it may be assumed that some of the firstfruits and firstborn animals would have some blemishes in them, and yet were to be given to the priests.

proceeds from the wicked can be, we refer ourselves herein to the answer we have made to [Prov. 15:8](#) cited by them to the same purpose [above].

Their second reason against our maintenance is: That it is fixed and certain. This is alleged in the [61st page](#) of their *Discovery* and in sundry other parts of their writings. Concerning which we answer:

First, that this can be no good reason against all our ministers, seeing that we have some preach ordinarily and painfully⁷¹² who yet either live wholly of themselves or take nothing of the people but that which they give voluntarily.

Secondly, if it be a great fault to live upon a set stipend, yet seems it strange unto us that they should account it so great to make a nullity of our ministry.

Thirdly, we can see no reason why it should be thought either unlawful or inconvenient to set stipends to be given unto and received by the minister, for:

First, under Moses law a certain and set course was prescribed for the ministers' maintenance, and the people appointed what they should give. ([Dt. 14:22](#); [Num. 35:2, 9](#); etc.) Now if it be said of the manner of the Levitical maintenance that it was ceremonial, yet would we fain know what ceremony or shadow there can be in the certainty thereof: Shall we say that together with the ceremony itself all the equity also and moral reason is abrogated?

Secondly, as Ezekiel, describing the pattern of the new sanctuary that should be under the Gospel, alludes unto a certain and set maintenance that should be given to the ministry ([Eze. 45:1-5](#)), so there be sundry phrases and comparisons in the New Testament used by Christ and the apostles from which the same may be very probably gathered to be lawful and fit, as when the minister's maintenance is compared to the wages and hire of a servant [[Lk. 10:17](#); [1 Tim. 5:18](#)] and when it is compared to the soldier's pay [[1 Cor. 9:6-7](#)], both of which things are certain and set.

Thirdly, it stands with sound reason that the ministers' maintenance should be certain, for:

⁷¹² This was a good attribute, referring to ministers who take great pains in fulfilling their ministry.

First, seeing it is already proved that a sufficient maintenance must necessarily be given to the minister of the people, how can it be unlawful either for the people by their own promise or for the magistrate by law to bind them unto that which they should voluntarily do of themselves?

Secondly, by this kind of maintenance sundry of the people's infirmities (as their grudging to give ought when it is in their power to give or not to give, their base estimation likewise of the minister and looking for civil duty at his hand, and many other such like things) are best prevented: Yea we deny that ever any Church was so well informed wherein the most part of the people had not need to have such infirmities restrained in them by the wisdom and authority of the Christian magistrate.

Touching the places of Scripture in this point alleged by them ([1 Thess. 2:5](#); [1 Tim. 6:8](#); [Jud. 11, 13](#)), we give this answer:

First, that they condemn only the covetousness of men and not the set maintenance of ministers, which may be received without covetousness.

Secondly, if they will enforce these places against set payments to the minister, they may as well enforce them against all set payments to the prince, to the servant, to the laborer or any other.

Thirdly, if not, then seeing the apostle's rule in [1 Tim. 5:8](#) does concern even ministers as well as others ("But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith"), why should it be thought covetousness in him to provide a certain and set maintenance for himself and his family more than the same care is in any other Christian?

To the place, [Mt. 10](#), we say that the commandment which our Savior Christ gave there to his disciples ([vv. 7-9](#)) was temporary, and concerned that special voyage only, wherein (for their encouragement to the ministry) our Savior assures them that they should not need to fear the lack of maintenance, for He would supply that extraordinarily, as it were, by his especial providence in inclining the hearts of men to maintain them. And that this is so may appear by these reasons:

First, if it be a perpetual rule, we may thence gather that the minister ought now to have no abiding place, neither two coats, two pairs of shoes, nor a staff, neither that they may possess anything of their own. [vv. 9–11]

Secondly, they then received their gifts of preaching and working of miracles freely without cost, and therefore were bound from covenanting for stipend to dispense those gifts [v. 8], receiving no more than for their present necessity of food and raiment, which cannot be so said of those whose bringing up in learning is costly and whose study is painful.

Thirdly, by the commandment which our Savior Christ gives for provision for themselves (Lk. 22:35–36; Mt. 20) and that which Paul challenges (1 Cor. 9:6–7), it is evident that the restraint given in Mt. 10 was but temporary. Yea admit it might be proved from hence that no set maintenance was given to the ministers during the apostles' time (which cannot be), yet it follows not that there should be none now, seeing that the Church was then without those nourishing [civil] fathers which the Lord promised by the prophet (Isa. 49:23), without whose authority we see not how that order for forced maintenance could be taken. Neither doubt we to acknowledge even this for a special fruit of that blessing promised to come to the Church by Christian magistrates. [Ps. 68:29; 72:10–11; Isa. 60:5–7, 10–11; 61:6; 66:12, 19–20; Jer. 33:8–9; Hag. 2:7–9; Rev. 21:24–26]

Whereas they said that whatsoever is given to the maintenance of God's service should be free and voluntary, and allege for that these places, Ex. 15:2; 2 Cor. 8:12; 9:5, 7, we answer that the bond of the people's promise and magistrate's law is no hindrance to freedom and voluntariness, seeing the service and obedience of David was free and voluntary notwithstanding the vow and oath he bound himself with (Ps. 119:106); so was that also which is mentioned in Nehemiah (Neh. 10:38). For if covenanting should take away the voluntariness of the act [contra Ps. 40:6–8], then should it not be lawful to covenant with servants and laborers or any other [Mt. 20:1–2]; yea the Lord our God does bind Himself by Covenant to give that reward to the faith and obedience of his servants which yet He gives most freely and voluntarily. [Lk. 22:29–30, διατιθημι; Heb. 6:13–18]

The third reason they allege against our maintenance is this: That we are maintained by Jewish tithes; and concerning which they have these words in the [60th page](#) of their *Discovery*, “It is evident those who are thus maintained by those Jewish tithes and offerings are not the ministers of Christ,” and a little after, “these priests and people still retain the Levitical decimations in the same form, to the same ends.” And [page 16](#): “I could never see any difference between the Jews and them, save that the swine-herds, tithe-pigs and geese, etc.” To all which we thus answer:

First, it is evident that the tithes are not held amongst us by virtue of the Levitical Law,⁷¹³ but only by the positive law of our land. For proof whereof, these reasons following may be sufficient:

First, if this kind of maintenance were given to the minister for conscience and obedience to that [Levitical] Law, why should not the firstfruits, offerings and diverse other things also, which by a plain commandment were due to the Levitical priesthood, be given us as well as tithes?

Secondly, the manner of tithing (which in diverse parts of our land is diversely used and which through custom also is many ways altered) proves that paying of tithes amongst us is not according to the Levitical law, nor in religious obedience thereunto.

Thirdly, the law (by consent of the states in the parliament), having alienated the tithes in many places from the minister unto the prince and other men, does thereby declare that it appoints not the paying of the tithes by virtue of the Law of God.

Fourthly, sundry of our ministers are (and that even in the judgment of our whole Church) lawfully by other means maintained than by tithes, which is also a plain demonstration that both the Levitical Law is not held to be in force with us, and if it were, we might yet have some true ministers in our land notwithstanding.

Secondly, as the prince (without any show of Jewish superstition) may require of the ministers firstfruits and tenths, and of all the rest of the subjects fifteens, and

⁷¹³ The dominant view of the reformed in the Post-Reformation (with mainly prelatists as an exception) was that tithing, whether due to the Levitical laws, or with regard to ten percent of one's income, was not morally, universally binding by divine law. For the historical witnesses, see '[Tithes & Offerings](#)' (RBO); for the Biblical and natural law argument, see '[Start Here](#)' on the same page.

subsidies for the maintenance of the wars and other civil purposes, so doubt we not but he may as well especially by act of parliament (which is also the act of the people) require tenths of his people to the maintenance of the ministry, of which (as we have said before) he is bound to have a more special care and regard than of the maintenance of the wars or any other civil estate.

Their fourth reason against our maintenance is: That it arises from popish offerings and mortuaries. Concerning which we answer as follows:

First, there be sundry of our ministers that receive none at all, against whose congregations and ministers this reason cannot hold; and many even of them to whom the law allows offerings, have refused them that were accustomed to be given at the churchings and burials and such other things, as the receiving whereof they see would be likely to nourish superstition in the people.

Secondly, if all did receive and live by offerings, we see not what pollution can come to their ministry thereby: for why may not that creature of God which was first given to profane and superstitious uses be now lawfully translated to the maintenance of God's service, seeing that even under the Law translation was lawful, when (for a ceremony, to shadow what detestation the people of God should bear to the manners of the heathen and how they should be separated from them) many things were made unclean to the Jews that are not so to us: so also the iron and brass, silver and gold of Jericho was put into the treasure of God's House, as appears in the story of Joshua ([Josh. 6:24](#)), and David dedicated unto the Lord the brass, silver, and gold of all the nations that he subdued, as may also appear by Samuel ([2 Sam. 8:11](#)). Now if those goods that were not only put apart to an idolatrous use by a civil institution, but also actually abused to idolatry, might yet lawfully be received for the maintenance of the true service of God, how much more may the money we receive for offerings, etc. be lawfully taken and enjoyed by us, seeing whatsoever original the money and institution had, yet was it never applied to any idolatrous use.

Thirdly, if those offerings were polluted things, yet are they too accidental to overthrow the very being and nature of our ministry.

Our People may be Accounted Members of a True Visible Church

3rd Exception

Their third general exception is against our people and the private members of our assemblies whom they affirm to be such as no true Church of God can consist of.

Answer

The reasons amongst us to account of people for the members of the true Church are these:

First, we know many in whom (we think) we do discern infallible notes of an unfeigned conversion.

Secondly, that all that are (by many of our ministers) admitted to the sacrament and other privileges of the Church are such as can give account (in some true measure) of their faith and do not only generally profess obedience, but when they are convinced of any particular sin, they are also willing to profess particular sorrow and purpose of amendment.

Thirdly, many of those who are wicked and ignorant we cannot see just cause to account them willfully ignorant, nor obstinately rebellious, and therefore we may lawfully esteem them brethren notwithstanding their ignorance and sin; and this we think the apostle's own words will warrant us to do. (2 [Thess. 3:14-15](#))

Fourthly, our people in general profess the true faith and obedience of Christ, which makes them members of the whole Church, as we have already proved; and if any being dealt with according to the rule that Christ prescribes shall be found willful and obstinate in his ignorance and sin ([Mt. 18:15-17](#)), then as he ceases to profess the true faith and obedience of Christ, so may we by the laws of our land cease to account him a member of our Church.

Objection 1

The first thing they object against our people is this: That the ignorant and profane multitude, as they are confusedly made members of our Church by our baptism and admitted to all other privileges thereof, so is there no separation (they say) to be observed amongst them in their ordinary conversation [conduct]; concerning which matter, these are their own words in the [ninth page](#) of their *Discovery*:

“All the profane and wicked of the land, atheists, Papists, Anabaptists, heretics of all sorts, gluttons, riotous, blasphemous, etc. and who not that dwells in this land or is within the king’s dominions, all without exception are received into and nourished in the bosom of this Church with the Word and sacraments: none are here refused, none are here kept out.”

Answer 1

Whereunto we answer:

First, even by the preaching of the Word that separation which the Scripture so much commends is wrought and evidently to be discovered amongst the people of our land, and very many of our people there be that do carefully shun the private familiarity of all notorious offenders ([Lk. 12:51–53](#); [Acts 14:4](#); [17:4–5](#)).⁷¹⁴

Secondly, as all our ministers may by law, so many of them do keep from the Lord's Table every ignorant person and notorious offender.

Thirdly, many of our ministers do refuse to receive such into the Church by baptism whose parents will not make a confession of true faith and obedience to Christ. Neither does public authority of law enforce us to receive the child of any man against whom it may be manifestly proved that he professes not the true Faith.

Fourthly, children may lawfully be admitted to baptism though both their parents be profane, if those who are in the stead of parents to them do require baptism for them and give their promise to the Church for their religious education, seeing they may

⁷¹⁴ See ‘That Scandalous Persons are not Excommunicated until they are Actually Excommunicated by those with the Power of the Keys, Though We Ought Not to have Personal Fellowship with Them’ at ‘On Excommunication’ (RBO).

be lawfully accounted within God's covenant if any of their ancestors in any generations were faithful.⁷¹⁵ (Ex. 20:5)

Objection 2

The second thing they object against our people is: That the best of them are without true faith because they live not in obedience to Christ set up among them, nor practice his ordinances.

Answer 2

Whereunto we answer:

First, it is a most rash and presumptuous judgment to deny them amongst us to be a faithful people of whom these our brethren themselves do know that they have by the hearing of the Word been brought to such a faith as has been effectual in the reformation of their lives, because they practice not the whole discipline of Christ (partly because they knew it not and partly as they are hindered by authority). And this rash judgment which they give of our people is so much the more blameworthy because they cannot be ignorant with what care our people have sought by all good and dutiful means the reformation of the Church, and how much they have bewailed and mourned for the lack thereof; for which matter also we refer the reader to the answer we have above given to their fourth and fifth objections against the whole body of our assemblies.⁷¹⁶

Secondly, our people deserve not to be blamed for that they erect not the discipline, for:

First, as they esteem both our prince to be a most lawful and a Christian magistrate and our ministers to be true ministers of Christ, by whose means they

⁷¹⁵ This was the dominant view of Reformation and Post-Reformation protestant divines, contra the Independents and Separatists. See it derived from Scripture in reformed writings of that era, especially by Rutherford, at [‘The Baptism of the Children of Adherents’](#) (RBO).

⁷¹⁶ On pp. 230–40 above.

have received from God and do still enjoy not only those blessings that belong to the comfort of this life, but the means of eternal happiness and the effectual assurance of it also, they are justly afraid that by enterprising a public reformation not only without, but contrary to the direction and liking of them who by God's Word ought to have, if not the only, yet the principal hand in that work, they should highly offend God.

Secondly, they cannot find any warrant in holy Scripture for them that are private members of the Church to erect the discipline, no not though the magistrate and ministers who should deal in this work were altogether profane and ungodly in dividing the land of Canaan, which was a type of Heaven and of the Church under the gospel; and in all the Church causes that were dealt in under the government of Joshua, which was a type of Christ's government, neither private persons, nor the whole multitude had the managing of matters, but the people did all by the elders and chief fathers ([Josh. 19:51, 21:1; 22:14](#)), which also was commanded. ([Num. 34:16–29](#))

So in public Church-causes under the gospel, the Lord has ordained certain special men chosen out from among the people by their consent to rule and govern the rest. ([1 Tim. 5:17; 4:14](#)) And where God has sanctified and separated a special sort of men to any office or the administration thereunto belonging, there has He restrained all others that are not of the same sort from doing the actions properly belonging to that office, as may well appear by comparing these places of holy Scripture together: [Num. 4:15](#) with [1 Chron. 26:12–19](#); [[2 Sam. 6:6–7](#)]. Therefore we also see that the faithful at Lystra, Iconium and Antioch had no elders till the apostles by their consent ordained them ([Acts 14:23](#)); no more had they at Crete till Titus was sent to that purpose. [[Tit. 1:5](#)]

To the places of holy Scripture which they allege for this their second objection against our people ([Jer. 31:34; Eze. 44:8–9; Cant. 4:7; 1 Pet. 2:9; Acts 15:9](#)), we answer:

First, that some of them concern the invisible Church, and therefore are ignorantly applied to the description of them that are members of the visible-Church, as if no measure of faith and holiness were to be allowed by men in the judging of the members of the visible-Church but that only which the Lord Himself allows of in judging of the elect members of the visible Church. Whereas

it is evident that to the making of the members of the visible Church an outward obedience and profession of faith is sufficient,⁷¹⁷ though there be no inward grace, nor truth in the heart.⁷¹⁸

Secondly, that some of them require indeed that every Christian should seek the kingdom of God and the place where God is worshipped according to his Word, submit themselves to the yoke of Christ and to obey Him in all his ordinances: but that the people without either the magistrate or ministers' help or consent should reform the Church and erect the discipline, they are so far from commanding that if they be well compared with that we have above said, they will be found to command the contrary.

Objection 3

The third thing they object against our people is: That though some of them had once been faithful, yet by tolerating in their assemblies the open profane, by lacking power to cast them out and communicating with them in their worship of God, they are now become no true Church of Christ.

Answer 3

Whereunto we answer:

First, that the godly which are in our assemblies do not at all tolerate the wicked profane, but do as much (as in them lies) show their dislike to them,⁷¹⁹ mourning also for their profaneness and for the lack of Christian discipline whereby they might be

⁷¹⁷ See 'What is a Profession of Faith Sufficient for Church Membership?' at 'Church Membership' (RBO).

⁷¹⁸ This was the dominant position of Post-Reformation reformed divines, contra the Independents and Separatists. See 'The Visible Church is Outwardly in the Covenant of Grace' (RBO) and 'Presumptive Regeneration' (RBO).

⁷¹⁹ See 'That Scandalous Persons are not Excommunicated until they are Actually Excommunicated by those with the Power of the Keys, Though We Ought Not to have Personal Fellowship with Them' at 'On Excommunication' (RBO).

separated; yea the very laws of our Church (as has been above said) do separate from our assemblies the open profane.

Secondly, admit they did not at all shut out the profane (either because they know not their right or for that they are hindered and restrained to do it, or that they sin in not using their right in this case), or if it were granted that the people (even the private members of the assemblies) had full authority given them by Christ without the ministers or magistrate's consent to cast out and excommunicate the open profane (the contrary whereof has been before sufficiently proved), yet might they as lawfully for lack of power or for such inconveniences tolerate the profane amongst them, and so forbear the execution of their authority in this case,⁷²⁰ as either David did spare Joab [2 Sam. 3:26-29, 39; 18:14-15; 20:8-10; 1 Kn. 2:5-6, 28-34], or as Amaziah [delayed executing justice upon] those rebels that slew his father because they were not strong enough to do justice upon them [2 Kn. 14:5; 2 Chron. 25:3].

Thirdly, the communicating in God's service with these open sinners whom the godly in some of our assemblies are enforced to communicate with or to lack the benefit of God's public worship, is not sufficient either to make them profane or pollute unto them the holy things of God. For proof whereof we allege:

First, the examples of the godly that lived under the ceremonial law. The prophets either served not God at all in the Temple or else they joined in God's service with many that were notoriously stained with gross sins. For who are they whose sins the prophets so mightily cry out upon (Isa. 1:10; Jer. 5:1-9; Eze. 16:48-51) but such as were admitted to the public worship of God? (Jer. 7:8-11; Eze. 22:25-26)

If the Babylonians and the Chaldeans should violently have included themselves into the Church assemblies of God's people in the time of their captivity, should the godly Jews by such presence of the wicked which they lacked power to hinder, either have been persuaded to cease from public worship of God or have been polluted by it? Were Anna and Simeon, or the blessed Virgin and Joseph polluted by communicating with the Jews in their time (Lk. 2:25, 27, 36-37), when not only the people, but also the priests with whom they communicated were

⁷²⁰ See 'On How Church Discipline is Limited to Edification in its Time & Place, etc.' at 'On the Ordinances, Order & Policy of the Church' (RBO).

both in doctrine and life so much corrupted [Mt. 15:7-9; 21:12-13; 23:4-7, 13-14; 26:3-4; 28:11-15; Mk. 12:24; 15:10-11; Lk. 20:46-47; Jn. 5:39-40; 9:22; 18:12-14]. Or did this stain all that justice for which Zacharias is so commended for that he kept his course and so served in the Temple even in that corrupt age [Lk. 1:5-6]. But what need further examples be brought for the practice of the godly that lived under the Law, seeing it is evident that our Savior Himself was by circumcision made a member of that corrupt Church of Jewry and presented in that temple when he was an infant (Lk. 2:21-22), and when He came to years of discretion, He communicated with them in the public service of God, for He went with his parents to the Passover (Lk. 2:41), He went to the feast of the Tabernacles (Jn. 7:10), his custom was to frequent the synagogues on the Sabbath Day, even before He entered into the ministry (Lk. 4:16); yea He commands the people so far to hearken unto and to follow the directions of those wicked scribes and Pharisees as they kept themselves within the chair of Moses and taught his doctrine (Mt. 23:1-3).

But this reason taken from the examples of the godly that lived under the law, Henry Barrow in the 39th and 40th pages of his *Discovery* seeks to shift off after this manner, viz. that nothing then defiled the godly if the priest and people with whom they communicated were not legally and ceremonially polluted: for the priests and ecclesiastical state then were not to meddle with the faults of manners, nor to separate any from the congregations for moral sins. But it is now under the gospel far otherwise where all things are become new and spiritual, and where all manner of known sins obstinately held and maintained have as great force to defile men in the judgment of the Church and to deserve separation as legal pollutions, leprosies, running issues and other diseases had then. To which reply we answer:

First, that moral transgressions did defile men and make them worthy to be separated from God's public worship then as well as they do now,⁷²¹ for it is evident by the Law that they who had morally offended were kept from the congregation till they had professed their repentance and till atonement had been made for them. For to what purpose can we imagine that public

⁷²¹ For further confirmation of this point, see Gillespie, *Aaron's Rod Blossoming, or the Divine Ordinance of Church Government Vindicated...* (Edinburgh: Ogle, Oliver & Boyd, 1844), bk. 1, chs. 8-13, pp. 36-65.

confession, bringing a sin offering and seeking of atonement to be made by the priest should be enjoined him that had committed a moral transgression ([Lev. 4:13–14, 22, 27; 5:1, 16; 6:27; Num. 15:22–25](#)) if without the doing of these things he might be still partaker of the public worship; and if these things do not import a restraint from the public worship, then will it follow that the moral transgressor was left free from all censure and ecclesiastical punishment notwithstanding this his open and manifest contempt of God's ordinances: for there is no other censure appointed in the whole law for the punishment of this contempt, and consequently the whole worship of God did lie open to most notorious profanation and confusion.

Secondly, the man that did morally offend is as well called unclean by the Holy Ghost as he that had transgressed the ceremonial law; and the very same [Hebrew] word, *tame* [טָמֵא], that is put for ceremonial uncleanness in one place ([Lev. 5:2–3](#)), is put for moral uncleanness in another ([Lev. 18:23–24, 29](#)); and consequently where it is said in the book of Chronicles that by Jehoiadab's appointment porters were set by the gates of the house of the Lord that none that was unclean in anything should enter in ([2 Chron. 23:19](#)), it may and ought to be understood of the restraining of them that were morally, as well as those that were ceremonially, unclean.

Thirdly, the priest was commanded to deal with him that in some things sinned of ignorance against the moral law ([Lev. 5:1, 4; Num. 15:22–25](#)), even in the same sort as he was to deal with him that was legally polluted through ignorance. ([Lev. 5:2–3, 6](#))

Fourthly, he that was privy to himself of moral transgression was bound in conscience to abstain from the sacrifices and sacraments, though he were not ceremonially polluted: [Isa. 1:10–14; Jer. 7:9–11; Mt. 5:23–24](#). And were not the Church governors then bound to separate such when they also and the congregation were made privy to such transgressions?

But why spend we so many words in confuting this most absurd assertion seeing themselves in the [89th](#) and [90th](#) pages of their *Refutation* affirm and labor to prove by many testimonies that under the Law many persons were to be separated from the congregation for moral transgressions?

A second reason to prove that the godly are not polluted by communicating in the true worship of God with known and open sinners may be taken from the example of the godly that have lived in the Churches under the Gospel:⁷²²

The godly that were in the Church of Corinth remained saints and faithful still (1 Cor. 1:2) though they had communicated in God's worship with the incestuous person [1 Cor. 5:1], with such as accounted fornication no sin [1 Cor. 6:13, 18; 10:8; 2 Cor. 12:21], as came profanely to the sacrament [1 Cor. 11:20–34], as denied the Resurrection [1 Cor. 15:12].

The faithful in Pergamos receive no pollution from them that lived amongst them and joined with them in God's worship and yet maintained the doctrine of Balaam and of the Nicolaitans (Rev. 2:14–15), nor they of Thyatira from Jezebel (Rev. 2:20), who was tolerated amongst them to teach and deceive, and cause many to commit fornication amongst them and to eat meat sacrificed to idols.

And (to let pass all other examples) we would gladly know this of our brethren themselves: Whether if it should so fall out in their assemblies (as it may in the most perfect Church that is upon the earth) that some one wicked man should remain uncast out, either through the ignorance or partiality, or fear of the Church governors, they should for that one man's sake deprive themselves of all the comfort they find in their meetings? If they would not, why give they not the like liberty to the godly amongst us who have and do still look for as much comfort in our assemblies as they do in theirs? If they would, then who is so blind as not to see that their congregation is a very Babel and place full of miserable confusion, or so mad as either to join himself unto it, or being joined, to remain in it any longer?

If they allege that the former examples are all unfitly applied unto our people for that they were all true Churches whereunto the godly above named did join themselves, and therefore were not easily to be forsaken, and the worship wherein they communicated with the wicked was the true worship of God (whereas neither our assemblies are true Churches, nor our worship

⁷²² For much reformed material proving this and related points from Scripture, see 'On Schism & Separatism' (RBO).

the true worship of God), or they continued not in this their fault with that obstinacy that we and our people do, we answer:

That they beg that which is in question between us, for neither do our people doubt whether it be the true Church and worship of God wherein they communicate, nor do they see how they have been convinced of sin in this action. And we have already proved at large both that our Church is a true Church and our worship is the true worship of God, and that we cannot justly be charged with obstinate continuance in those lacks and corruptions that are now amongst us.

To the places of Scripture which they bring against our people in this point in the 68th page of their *Collection of Letters and Conferences*, we answer that they are all most unskillfully applied, for although some of them do prove that God's people should be separated from the rest of the world ([Lev. 20:24](#); [Jn. 15:16](#); [2 Cor. 6:14-17](#)), some of them that they may not offer sacrifice unto a multitude of gods, nor join with idolaters ([Isa. 65:11](#)), neither in the false worship of God ([Eze. 16:25](#)), nor in voluntary⁷²³ leagues and familiarity; other some of their Scriptures prove that the minister must deal sincerely in the delivery of God's message to his people, not mixing any vile opinion or assertion of his own with the precious Word of God ([Jer. 15:19](#)), nor applying the Word to their humors and liking, but cause them rather to frame and apply themselves unto it, yet do no one of these prove either that the communicating in the true worship of God with some that are profane is of force to cut off a people from the Church and Covenant of God or that the godly should rather abstain from the exercise of God's true worship than use it in the company of some others that are ungodly, or that it is the sin of the people that such are not separated from amongst them; and surely we cannot but wonder that our brethren do thus deal with the sacred Word of God: they use to fill the margins of their books with such store of places of Scripture that the simple might think that they have even a cloud of witnesses against us when themselves could not but know that the Scripture is by them

⁷²³ That necessary leagues and familiarity with idolaters is lawful and necessary, see 'On Civil Relations with Idolaters' at 'On Idolatry' (RBO).

dragged as it were by violence to bear witness in a matter for which they have not one word to speak.

Conclusion

From these three exceptions that have been above answered, they infer this conclusion, that therefore they may lawfully, and ought to separate themselves from us in such sort as they do. In this conclusion there are two articles whereunto we will answer severally.

Article 1

The first article in their conclusion is this: The [Anglican] assemblies which we go from are such as the Word of God does warrant us to go from.

Answer 1

Whereunto we answer:

That we may much more strongly conclude upon that which we have above written that because we have a true Church consisting of a lawful ministry and a faithful people, therefore they cannot separate themselves from us but they must needs incur the most shameful and odious reproach of manifest schism.

The [the force of the] places of holy Scripture which they allege to warrant their separation, but we affirm to be of no force to conclude that which they are brought for, shall more plainly appear when they are considered of apart and sorted so as the variety of their nature requires:

The first sort of their testimonies concern only that private and voluntary familiarity which Christ has forbidden to have with the wicked that live in the Church. (1 Cor. 5:9, 13; Eph. 5:7, 10-11; 2 Thess. 3:6, 14-15) This shall appear to be the true meaning of the apostle, even of that place of 1 Cor. 5:9, which in the 218th page of their *Refutation* and in sundry other places of their writings they urge so as it may seem they judge it to be of more force for this purpose than all the rest.

First, the word συναναμίσγνυμι [“company with”], used by the apostle both in this place and in [2 Thess. 3:14](#), does with a double composition with two such prepositions note a most familiar acquaintance and conversation [conduct].

Secondly, it cannot be shown in all the Scripture where this phrase “to eat” [[1 Cor. 5:11](#)], being barely and generally set down without any addition, is taken for the eating of the sacrament.

Thirdly, if the apostle had meant a separation in the Church assemblies, he would have commanded the Church rather to cut off and to put from them these wicked men than to separate themselves from the wicked.

Fourthly, it appears by the [tenth and eleventh verses](#) [of 1 Cor. 5] being compared together that the apostle wrote the second time to clear his meaning in that which he had written before [[1 Cor. 5:9](#)]; and therefore in this place he requires no more separation from brethren that are fornicators than the Corinthians did think he had (in a former letter) from such fornicators as were out of the Church. Now the Corinthians could never imagine that when the apostle forbade them to eat with heathens and infidels that were fornicators that his meaning should be to forbid them communicating with such in the service of God: for they never had been accustomed to communicate so, and therefore the separation he requires must needs be meant only of private and voluntary familiarity.

If they object that the apostle in requiring separation from the wicked in private conversation does much more forbid all society with them in the worship of God,⁷²⁴ seeing that thereby we join ourselves much nearer together than by any civil fellowship (as they affirm in the [218th page](#) of their *Refutation*), we answer that the reason follows not, for:

First, it is in a private man's power to keep from his first table any wicked man, in whose hand yet it lies not to shut any from the Lord's Table.

⁷²⁴ Against this point in general see the resources at ‘[On Schism & Separatism](#)’ (RBO).

Secondly, each Christian as he is bound by the commandment of God to the exercises of religion, especially in such as are public, so is he to forbear the private familiarity of the wicked.

Thirdly, even as a Christian may eat privately with a wicked man or with an excommunicated person in some cases, when his company cannot be eschewed, as being in an army or prison, or in a ship upon the sea amongst a company of vile, wicked men, being by the prince or any other that has power enforced either to do so or utterly to lack all food, so much more is it lawful for a Christian to eat with the wicked man at the Lord's Table wherein he is enforced either to do so or utterly to lack all the great benefits and comfort that God offers him in the sacrament.

The second sort of their testimonies (Mt. 7:15; Rom. 16:17; 2 Tim. 3:5; Tit. 2:6) whereby they labor to warrant their separation concern only the avoiding and taking heed of false prophets, blind guides, hypocritical and profane deceivers; and therefore they can with no peace to their consciences ground their separation upon them till they have sufficiently proved that not some of our ministers, but all are not only faulty in their practice, but teach also unsound and corrupt doctrine, which they will never be able to prove.

The third sort of their testimonies (2 Cor. 6:14, 18; Rev. 18:4) do indeed partly concern that separation which Christians should make from idolators in the service of God, yet do they no ways serve to justify this their separation from us unless they could prove (which they are not able to do) that those assemblies which these Scriptures command a separation from were in the profession of truth equal to us or that the corruptions which are amongst us are equal unto such as were in those assemblies.⁷²⁵

Besides these testimonies, they seek by two reasons to prove the necessity of their separation from us, whereof the first is taken from the hurt that may come to the true

⁷²⁵ See 'On the Distinction & Difference between Impurities of Worship & Idolatry, & being Present & Worshipping Lawfully at an Assembly with certain Impure Acts of Worship by Some in it (Lev. 10:16-20; 1 Cor. 11-14) vs. Fleeing an Assembly with Literal Idolatry (Ex. 32:4; 1 Kings 13:1-10; 2 Chron. 11:13-16; 1 Jn. 5:21; Rev. 18:4)' at 'On Impurities in Worship' (RBO).

Christian by communicating with the wicked; the other from the hurt he may do to the wicked with whom he does communicate.

Concerning the first, they have these words in the 97th page of their *Refutation*, "A little leaven leavens the whole lump [1 Cor. 5:6], so one openly unworthy received to the Lord's Supper makes all the communicants guilty." And in the 34th page of their *Discovery*:

"The known and suffered sin of any one member is contagious to all such as communicate in prayers and sacraments with such an obstinate offender, and makes them as guilty in God's sight as he himself is."

Whereunto we answer:

First, that we have already proved by many examples (in the answer we have above given unto the last thing they object against the people and private members of our Church)⁷²⁶ that the godly receive no contagion from the wicked with whom they are enforced to communicate in the true worship of God.

Secondly, that their assertion may by reason appear evidently to be most absurd, for if the presence of the wicked should of its own nature make the action of the sacrament and prayer void and of none effect to the faithful that communicate with him, then should we never without great doubting and wavering communicate in those holy exercises in such a congregation where all that we join with are not well known unto us, for fear there should be in the company some open offenders whom ourselves know not of. If our knowledge and privy to his sin be the thing that makes his presence contagious to us, especially when we have admonished him and by all means testified our dislike to his sin so far as in us lies, then how is the prophet to be understood when he says the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon his own head? (Eze. 18:20) But admit this was granted, that the presence of the wicked in prayer and sacrament did infect the godly, how will they excuse their refusal to hear the Word preached in our assemblies, seeing it is so clear by the apostle's speech that the preaching of the Word might be of force to

⁷²⁶ See pp. 280–86 above.

do them good though some that joined with them in the hearing of it were infidels? (1 Cor. 14:24–25)

To their second reason, wherein they pretend a charitable regard to us, who by their joining with us in God's worship may be hardened in the liking of our corruptions and by their separation may haply be brought to repentance, we answer:

That the godly man who has reproved the open offender, shunned his private familiarity and has gone so far in testifying his dislike to his sin as the bounds of his calling will permit, is no way accessory to his sin, nor has any fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness (Eph. 5:11); and if that any wicked man will imagine that the godly do not much dislike him because they will not for his sake shun the public worship of God, it is an offense taken and not given,⁷²⁷ and therefore such as wherewith the conscience of a godly man need not to be troubled.

Thus have we answered that which they pretend for the warrant and necessity of their separation from our assemblies. And now lest any should be justly offended by thinking that in this apology we make for our Church, we do any way plead for Baal or seek to daube up the breaches of our Church with untempered mortar and so run ourselves into the danger or that curse which the Lord denounces against them that call darkness light and speak good of evil [Isa. 5:20], we therefore freely confess that there are (indeed) in our Church great corruptions; and that is the great sin of our ministers, that they do not with so much zeal and courage reveal and show their dislike of them, and of our people that they mourn not, nor seek by all humble and earnest means to God and the magistrate for reformation of them as they ought to do. And yet (though many in this land do both know and mourn, and make known also in their callings their great dislike unto those corruptions that are amongst us, as much as any of these brethren with truth can do, we dare confidently affirm:

First, that the corruptions of our Church are not such as for which a Christian may make separation from us; and that we are hereby induced to avouch because we find that in the Old and New Testament, as has been above said, as many and

⁷²⁷ For more on this and other distinctions about scandal, see 'Gillespie's 12 Propositions on Scandal' at 'On Scandal & Offenses' (RBO).

as heinous corruptions to have been in such assemblies as from which no separation was ever taught or practiced.

Secondly, though we did grant that (upon warrant of some places that they bring) there might lawfully (upon due regard of some circumstances) a separation be made even from our assemblies, yet do we affirm that forasmuch as they have failed in sundry of those circumstances, that therefore their separation is utterly unjustifiable; for whereas they could not with any just warrant to their consciences separate themselves from us till they had found us obstinate in our corruptions and temptuous scornors of all good means used for reforming us (as is evident by the example of such separations as are commended in the Word, [Acts 13:45–46; 19:8–9](#)), we affirm that they have departed from us before they could (with any charity or good conscience) be so persuaded of us. And this we doubt not to prove to their own consciences and to all that know them well by these reasons following:

First, they separated themselves from us before either by writing or any competent means they had soundly convicted us or manifested unto our judgment the dangerous errors we held, wherein they have manifestly transgressed the rule of the Word. ([Acts 19:8–9; 2 Tim. 4:2; Tit. 1:10–11; 3:10](#)) We grant indeed the truth and necessity of the government of Christ prescribed in the Word which has been sufficiently manifested to the Church and that our Church has been sufficiently convinced of many gross corruptions; but that for the lack of some parts of discipline our Church should be no Church, or that for the corruptions amongst us, our ministers should be no true ministers or our people no faithful people (which are the very fundamental principles of their schism and almost the very matter of difference betwixt them and us), in these points we deny that either to this day they have sufficiently convinced us or that before the first time of their separation they had in any measure used means to convince us.

Secondly, after they had convicted us in judgment they should have (by brotherly admonition and exhortation) sought to persuade us unto the love and practice of the truth revealed and to the hatred and forsaking of the manifested corruptions ([2 Thess. 3:14–15; Tit. 3:10; Heb. 10:15](#)), and it is evident they did not before their separation.

Thirdly, the Scripture forbids the Church to eject a private member till in all patience and long suffering his repentance has been waited for and the fruit expected of the aforesaid means (2 Thess. 3:14–15; 2 Tim. 2:24–25; 4:2), which evidently reproves their hasty and sudden departure from us, either before or suddenly after they had used the means above-said, especially seeing that in all reason more long-sufferance should be used by such private members as they were toward a whole Church than by a whole Church towards private members.

Fourthly, whereas they should have used all the means above-said in meekness, humility and love, mourning also for the hardness of our hearts whereby the means became frustrated unto us. (Eph. 4:15; 2 Tim. 2:25; Tit. 3:2; Heb. 10:24–25) It is evident that their zeal in dealing against us has been like the rash and indiscreet zeal (Lk. 9:55) spoken of and reprov'd in the sons of Zebedee (Mt. 20:20–23), and has favored altogether of uncharitableness and not of love: for as all they that once have declined to that schism are found to be exceedingly proud and disdainful towards all that are contrary minded, yea even such as (before they were infected with that leaven) were patterns of all love, modesty and humility unto others, so will they not acknowledge nor reverence any of the most excellent graces that God has given unto any of his servants amongst us, nor so much respect them as the very Papists will do; no, they profess greater detestation and despite to the most godly and most sincere men amongst us than they do to such as are most notorious in profaneness and malice to the truth. To which purpose also we desire that the spirit whereby Henry Barrow was directed in writing his last books may be well examined.

Fifthly, whereas by the equity of the rule which our Savior Himself gives [Mt. 18:15–17], and according to the practice of the apostolic Church [Acts 15:1–2], we should have had our corruptions made known to some other reformed Churches, and by them we should have been convinced and admonished before these our brethren could rightly judge us as heathens and publicans. We affirm that they (as if the Word of God had come out from them or had come unto them only [1 Cor. 14:35]) have by their disorderly separation not

only despised and robbed us of our right, but all other Christian Churches in the world besides.

Sixthly, they have not so much as protested the cause of their separation from us to the particular congregations whereof before their departure they were accounted of by others and did also acknowledge themselves to be members.

Seventhly, those of them which once exercised the places of the ministry amongst us and received for the same the reward due which they call Balaam's wages, have not before or since their departure made actual restitution of that which was (if their opinions be true) most unjustly received, nor yet shown themselves willing so to do to their ability, which notwithstanding by the Law of God they are most strictly bound to do.

Article 2

The second article in their conclusion is this: That the [Separatist] assemblies which they go and join themselves unto are such as the Word of God commands them to go unto.

Answer 2

Whereunto we give this answer:

First, that if they had followed the direction of God's Word when they had left us for our corruptions and lacks as they charge us with, they should have joined themselves to some other Reformed Churches which are pure from our corruptions and amongst whom the discipline of Christ is rightly established, as we find the faithful Levites and people did in the days of Jeroboam. [[2 Chron. 11:13-17](#)] And every wise-hearted Christian will hold it to be a reason of great force against them that they have made separation not from us only, but from all other Reformed Churches in the world: for thereby they appear to have been of this judgment, that till they arose there was not

a true-constituted visible Church in the whole world known unto them unto which they might have joined themselves.

Secondly, the assemblies which they erected and joined themselves unto, if they be looked into with a Christian and indifferent eye, shall well appear to be much more deformed than many of those are which they have forsaken: for proof whereof we desire the readers to weigh well with the weights of the sanctuary [[Lev. 27:25](#)] and to try by the touchstone of the Word, first, certain points of doctrine which they have both brewed and broached to the world in their printed books, then secondly their practice, and thirdly their dispositions:

First, all their paradoxes and absurd opinions we will not set down, but in some few we will give the readers a taste of the rest:

In the [138th page](#) of their *Discovery* they affirm that such an idolatrous shape cleaves to every stone of our material churches as by no means can be severed from them while there is a stone left standing upon a stone, so that neither they can be used to the worship of God, nor have we any use of them, seeing that they are execrable and devoted to destruction.⁷²⁸

In the [167th page](#) of the same book they teach that to every Christian God has given his holy, sanctifying Spirit to open unto them and to lead them into all truth.⁷²⁹ Much like unto this is that which they write in the [161st page](#) of their

⁷²⁸ The typical reformed view and practice was that the material church buildings of Romanists, when cleansed, may be repurposed for good uses ([1 Tim. 4:4-5](#)). On the more exceptional cases where a Romanist building had been so notoriously idolatrous and scandalous, the scandal not removing with the removal of the idolatry, the reformed typically destroyed the building wholly, not allowing it to be further used. The Separatists, as seen here, were generally for destroying all the buildings that had been used by Romanists, not thinking it lawful to repurpose the material goods. See '[On Church Buildings & Architecture](#)' (RBO) and '[On Monuments & Badges of Idolatry](#)' (RBO).

⁷²⁹ The Separatists were making use of [1 Jn. 2:27](#). However, the verse's context is speaking of the Spirit teaching Christians, without teachers, of all kinds of things relating to the foundation of the Faith, in protection against antichrist seducers that would draw them away from Christ altogether. The verse does not say or intend that the Spirit would lead laypersons into "all truth" apart from Christian teachers. Bolton: "If the question were, Who shall judge of truths absolutely necessary? It is the same with fundamental truths: and I say, that every Christian is able to judge of God's mind in such truths; He tells us, 'We have an unction from the holy One, whereby we know all things,' that is, all things necessary to salvation: and He has told us, 'His Spirit shall lead us into the way of all truth;' that is, necessary truths... And for those things which are less necessary, councils may declare, and if you search, if you study, if you examine and be faithful in your scrutiny, God will reveal them to you also, at least so much as is for your comfort, and cheerful walking in the ways of God." [Arraignment of Error](#), p. 138. Bolton cites in the margin for this Whitaker, John Rainolds and Aquinas.

Refutation, that it is an execrable position to say that the Church and every member thereof is in some spiritual bondage to sin.⁷³⁰

Touching the magistrate's authority, besides that by the whole tenor of their writings it appears they hold that the people may take in hand the public reformation of the Church and erect the whole discipline not only without, but contrary to the Christian magistrate's liking and consent. They do also directly affirm, [page 218](#) and [219](#) of their *Discovery*, that God has in the holy Scripture made most perfect and necessary laws both for the Church and commonwealth, and that He requires of the king and magistrate to see their laws executed and not to make new laws.⁷³¹

Neither do they judge ever a whit more dutifully of the Churches of God, for of them they use to speak as if there had been no true Church in the world till they sprung up, nor were at this time any right-constituted Church assembly in the world but their own: for in the Epistle to the Reader which they prefixed before their *Discovery*, in the [first page](#) thereof, they have these words: "The whole land (I say not the whole world) has lain so long and is so deep set in the defection, etc." And in the [second page](#): "Although the truth has long lain hid and buried, and be now impugned of all men."

But why should we wonder that they judge so erroneously of men, seeing the sacred worship of God they hold may receive pollution from men that deal in it, for in the [30th page](#) of their *Discovery* they teach that the open sin of the minister defiles the sacrament and prayer administered by them. Yea in the [34th page](#) they go somewhat further and say that the known and suffered

⁷³⁰ For whatever verbiage one uses, and Scripture uses various descriptors ([Rom. 6:7-18](#); [8:15](#)), believers are yet, according to the remnants of sin in them, in a way "carnal, sold under sin" ([Rom. 7:14](#)). Every believer must confess "in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing" ([Rom. 7:18](#)) and "evil is present with me... I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?... with the flesh [I serve] the law of sin." ([Rom. 7:21-25](#))

⁷³¹ Theonomy was characteristic in that era of the Erastians, Brownists (Separatists) and New England Independents. To see this verified, and against Theonomy generally, see 'The General Equity of the Old Testament Civil Laws & the Judicial Laws' (RBO) and 'Against the Regulative Principle of Civil Government' at 'Civil Government' (RBO). That the Church may set forth its own subservient ordinances in accord with its circumstances, with the magistrate confirming these by its authority, see 'On the Ordinances, Order & Policy of the Church' (RBO). Note also, 'Against the Regulative Principle of Civil Government' at 'Civil Government' (RBO).

sin of any one member is contagious to all such as communicate with him in that estate and makes them all as guilty in God's sight as he himself is.⁷³²

Touching the articles of our faith, which by all the godly in all ages have been called the Apostles' Creed, thus they speak in the 76th page of their *Discovery*: "Their forged patchery, commonly called the Apostles' Creed." The article of Christ's descending into Hell, what sense soever it be taken in,⁷³³ they call in the 48th page of their *Refutation*, "that blasphemous article of our Faith."

Besides these gross absurdities, they hold against other points of wholesome doctrine. Let the reader guess at the judgment they have in the manner of Church government⁷³⁴ (wherein they would appear to be better seen than all the godly-learned in the world besides) by these few things which we will offer to your consideration:

First, whereas they have in their writings disclaimed the discipline which we desire and other reformed Churches have received, they have never yet clearly set down what discipline it is which they themselves stand so much for. In the 27th page of their *Discovery*, when they have scoffed at the discipline we seek, they offer words to this effect, that without the power and practice of the diligent watch of every member, but chiefly of the rulers and elders, the Word of God is made as an idol, the sacrament sacrilege unto us and all things we do are odious and abominable to the Lord.

Whereby it appears they are of opinion that there can be no true religion there where either there is no eldership established or where the elders fail in the execution of their office, or where any one private member of the Church shall fail in doing the office of a watchman and censurer to

⁷³² To see these positions disproved, see 'On Schism & Separatism' (RBO).

⁷³³ The two main reformed interpretations were that the phrase refers to Christ's sufferings on the cross (Heidelberg Catechism 44) or his being under the power of death in the grave (WLC 50), which two interpretations are not necessarily exclusive of each other. In the Anglican context other interpretations were also common. See "He Descended into 'Hell'" (RBO).

⁷³⁴ The Separatists, as manifested by their quotes below, were generally Independents in Church government. Against such, see 'Congregationalism & Independency' (RBO).

the rest. Much like to this is that which they write in the 37th page of their *Refutation*:

“Has the greater minister in the Church any more power to retain and loose the sin of the least member than the same member has to bind or loose his sin?”

In the 119th page of their *Discovery*, speaking of the Church government which has been sought for amongst us and received by other reformed Churches, they have these words:

“The thing itself they corrupt in that they add new devices of their own, as their pastoral suspension from their sacraments, their set continued synods, their select classes of ministers, their settled supreme council;”

whereby they have well expressed what they mean in the 29th and 249th pages of their *Refutation* when they affirm that the Church has no power to make any laws of indifferent things,⁷³⁵ and page 193 of their *Discovery*, that the people, without any minister may give ordination and full calling into the ministry.⁷³⁶

Secondly, as their judgment is erroneous, so is the practice of their discipline in their assemblies most disorderly, for:

First, none can gather Churches from infidelity, nor may go about it, but only such as are appointed to it by our Savior Christ, and He has appointed none for that work but ministers,⁷³⁷ which they also in the fourth page of the preface prefixed to the *Refutation* do confess: we would gladly know by what ministry their assemblies were first gathered, by what presbytery were the

⁷³⁵ While it is true ‘*Authorities have No Power over Circumstances or Indifferent Things Simply*’, or absolutely and as they are indifferent, ‘*Nor does the Command of Authorities make Indifferent Things Necessary*’ (both at ‘*On Things Indifferent*’ at RBO), yet authorities do have power within their scope over indifferent things unto good ends. See ‘*On the Ordinances, Order & Policy of the Church*’ (RBO).

⁷³⁶ That ministers collectively, specifically as a presbytery, have the regular, proper authority to ordain ministers, see ‘*Ordination*’ (RBO). That laypersons collectively do not have this power (apart from extraordinary circumstances and further qualifications), see ‘*Congregationalism & Independency*’ (RBO).

⁷³⁷ This ought to be qualified by extraordinary circumstances and calling; see ‘*On Extraordinary Calling*’ (RBO).

ministers that first gathered their assemblies examined and ordained with imposition of hands?

Secondly, when they first were gathered, what foundation had they to ground their faith and doctrine upon (especially in these points of controversy) when they neither had any other translation of the Scripture than that which they received from us, whom they judged no better than heretics and infidels, nor when any one among them was able by knowledge in the tongues to examine our translation by the original Scriptures.

Thirdly, how great a disorder it is that in their assemblies private persons are allowed to interpret the Scriptures publicly,⁷³⁸ and that they hold faith may even ordinarily be wrought by private men. Where God has separated and sanctified a special sort of men to any office and the administration belonging thereunto, there He has restrained others that are not of that sort from the ordinary doing of the actions properly belonging unto that office, as may appear by many testimonies and examples. Now it is evident that in the Old and in the New Testament the Lord did separate the priests and Levites, apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers [[Eph. 4:11](#)] to the public administration of the Word and prayer [[Acts 6:4](#)],⁷³⁹ of the sacrifices and sacraments⁷⁴⁰ of the Church, how then shall any other presume to meddle therewith?

The priests and Levites, who had ever by inheritance some right to all the services of the Tabernacle, might not lawfully exercise the meanest service

⁷³⁸ The authors do not say “preach” but “interpret”, the latter prerequiring much study and knowledge, whereas preaching, or declaring the Gospel, may be done in some cases without that. Note the Scottish [Directory for Family Worship](#) (1647) prohibits fathers in family worship from “interpreting the holy scriptures” as it “is a part of the ministerial calling,” but does not prohibit preaching or declaring the Gospel to their families. This likely reflects that some held ‘[Lay-Persons may, & Ought to, Preach Privately](#)’ at ‘Church Membership’ (RBO) and ‘[Teachers, Elders, Deacons & Laymen may Publicly Preach in Necessity](#)’ at ‘Preaching’ (RBO). On the larger point being made by the authors, see ‘[May a Person Teach Christianity who is not Ordained?](#)’ at ‘The Office of Teacher or Doctor’ (RBO) and ‘[Contra Lay Preaching in Ordinary Circumstances, Apart from Necessity](#)’ at ‘Preaching’ (RBO). All this ought to be qualified by extraordinary circumstances and other factors: ‘[On an Extraordinary Calling](#)’ (RBO).

⁷³⁹ This older view, dominant amongst the reformed in the Post-Reformation, did not see ruling elders as being set apart by office unto the Word or prayer: ‘[Congregational Prayer, Apart from Necessity, is to be by Ministers](#)’, ‘[Ruling Elders do Not have the Authority for Congregational Prayer by Office](#)’ and ‘[Ruling Elders do not have the Authority for Preaching, or Laboring in, or Ministering, the Word in Public Worship by Office](#)’ at ‘Ruling Elders’ (RBO).

⁷⁴⁰ See ‘[That Ministers Alone are to Administer the Sacraments](#)’ at ‘The Sacraments’ (RBO).

till they were specially called and consecrated thereunto (Ex. 28-29; Lev. 8:34), how much less then might any other deal in the public service of God without a public calling thereunto? We are not ignorant that they are wont to allege many testimonies of Scripture to warrant this disorder by, but alas they do it very ignorantly:

For many of them whose examples they cite were by special calling separated to the office of preaching:

The seventy disciples are said to have been sent by Christ (Lk. 10); Paul and Barnabas, when they preached at Antioch (Acts 13:1-2) in Pisidia (Acts 13:14), were not only lawful ministers but (for ought that can appear by this place to the contrary) they were so reputed also by the ruler of the synagogue (Acts 13:14-15), to whom their public and famous preaching in so many assemblies before (with the approbation of the Jews [Acts 13:5]) could not be unknown. The faithful men that the apostle writes of to Timothy, who should teach others also, were such only as should be both instructed by Timothy and receive authority from him to do it. (2 Tim. 2:2)

Of some others mentioned in their quotations, it is very probable that they were not private men but had a special calling to the office of preaching: the disciples that, being scattered through persecutions, went about preaching [Acts 8:1, 4], may very well be thought to have been ministers rather than private men,⁷⁴¹ unless we shall imagine there were no ministers in Jerusalem before the Church was scattered but the apostles only; and Philip, who is also called an evangelist [Acts 21:8], is the only man of name amongst all these scattered disciples that preached [Acts 8:5].

The prophets mentioned in 1 Cor. 14 were very likely either such whose extraordinary gifts did sufficiently prove to the Church that they were extraordinarily stirred up and called of God, or else such as being separated to the work of the ministry were by that exercise

⁷⁴¹ Gillespie and Rutherford take this passage as speaking of laymen in extraordinary circumstances; see their quotes on the page: 'On an Extraordinary Calling' (RBO).

of their gifts to be fitted to the full execution of that office, as those children of the prophets were for the like purpose trained up in these schools of the prophets mentioned in the Old Testament [2 Kn. 2:3; 4:38; 6:1-2]. And as they cannot conclude out of these places that those prophets were mere private men, so shall they not find the name of a prophet given in any place of holy Scripture to a mere private man.

The preaching mentioned in Lk. 8:39, the expounding of the way of God in Acts 18:26, the exhorting spoken of in 1 Thes. 5:11, was not ecclesiastical or Church-preaching, but only private and domestical instruction. Some other places which they allege (Phil. 2:15-16; 1 Pet. 3:12) concern neither public preaching, nor private instruction, but only the constant profession of the truth and holy conversation, which God requires of every Christian.

Thirdly, the gross disorders that are to be found in their assembly we have mentioned, to which the strange choice of their ministers may be added:

For by what testimony of holy Scripture can they warrant the admitting or choosing into the ministry such a one as within some six or eight weeks before was transplanted from so Antichristian a Church and ministry as they reckon ours to be? as not only master Francis Johnson,⁷⁴² but sundry others of their ministers have been. Sure we are that herein they have done directly contrary to the rule of the holy apostle; and for smaller faults than this they are ready to say against us in the 127th page of their *Refutation* that he that has not a true and right calling unto his office is no true minister, but a usurper, an intruder, a thief, a murderer, etc.

But what shall we need to reckon up anymore of the disorders that may be noted in their Church government, seeing it is not possible but that those assemblies should be full of confusion and disorder where no Church censure can pass

⁷⁴² Johnson (1562-1618) was an English, Brownist minister to an English separatist congregation in the Netherlands.

without the consent of every private man⁷⁴³ and wherein every member is made equal in power and authority with the ministers and elders of the Church?

These things being so, what is there to be seen amongst them whereby so many simple Christians are deceived and moved to forsake us and join to them? save only that show of sincerity and zeal and holy conversation [conduct] wherein they are thought to go far beyond any of us? Concerning which we say:

That although the conversation of many of our people and ministers also be very scandalous, and the lives of the best of us be far short of that perfection we daily strive unto, yet it shall well appear to him that will rightly consider these few lines following that the power of true godliness is much more lacking amongst them than 'tis with us whom they have forsaken: for if we may judge of the scholars by their teachers [Lk. 6:40] and of the miserable seduced multitude by their chief leaders, and if men do not use to speak, much less to write, but from the abundance of their hearts [Ps. 45:1], then have they as small cause certainly to boast of their holiness and to say they are not as other men, nor as we are whom they have forsaken, as the Pharisee in the gospel said (Lk. 18:9, 11, 14): this we dare boldly say, that there was never any man of note in our Church that in his writings has bewrayed so irreligious and unsanctified a spirit as their chief leaders have done. For proof whereof we desire the Christian reader to consider:

First the shameful lies which wittingly and against the light of their own hearts they have published and whereby they have in a manner borne false witness [Ex. 20:16] against us:

In the [ninth page](#) of their *Discovery* they say that all the atheists, Papists and Anabaptists, and heretics of all sorts, whores, thieves, witches, conjurers and who not, that dwell in this island or is within the Queen's dominions, are received and nourished within the bosom of this Church with the Word and sacraments; none are refused, none kept out.

⁷⁴³ Contra Independency, Presbyterians distinguished formal, public Church authority from consent and held that, in regular circumstances, no significant Church act ought to be done without the (at least implicit) consent of the people; see '[That Excommunication, in Regular Circumstances, must be Done with the Consent of the Whole Church](#)' at 'On Excommunication' (RBO).

In the 60th page of their *Discovery* they say these priests and people retain the Levitical decimations in the same form, to the same end. In the 63rd and 64th pages they affirm that the Service-book is the very groundwork of our Faith, Church and ministry, from whence we fetch all our directions for all things, that we are sworn to and by this book, and that the Word of God may not be taught but where this has been read.

In the 28th page they say we all adore the words of salutation which the angel Gabriel used to the virgin Mary [Lk. 1:26–28], that we worship either the purification [Lk. 2:27] or the person of “our Lady” (so they maliciously say we term the blessed Virgin) and that we pour out unto her our drink-offerings and burn incense to the Queen of Heaven [Jer. 44:17–18]; so through diverse pages they charge us with keeping fasts and feasts to the honor of saints.

In the 100th page they say their priest baptizes the child in the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, and of the holy cross.⁷⁴⁴ In the 148th page they say it is utterly denied in the Church of England that the magistrate should be excommunicated.

In the 183rd page they say that it is impossible to find two of our ministers in one mind and judgment, yea in any two churches of the land to have the same doctrine taught. In the 188th page they say that no one place of Scripture which makes express mention of the government of Christ, as Rom. 12; 1 Cor. 12 and 15, is suffered to be so much as read in our Churches. In the 175th page they say these new classes [presbyteries] take upon them to make ministers.

A second note whereby we may try the spirits of their chief leaders is their spiteful railing, wherein they are so rich and plentiful as we know not how to find amongst all the rabble of profane and ungodly men anyone that goes beyond them in it:

Our ministers they call Balaamites, Canaanites, Babylonish divines, Egyptian enchanters, limbs of the Devil, as bitter enemies as Turkish

⁷⁴⁴ This was likely pretexted on the ceremony of the minister making the sign of the cross on the person’s forehead in baptism with words from the rubric.

Janisaries [elite military soldiers], marked soldiers of the Beast, such as know not the doctrines of the beginning of Christ, such as were misled even from the mother's breast in profane heathenism, vain philosophy, ungodly arts, trained up in idolatry, superstition and most filthy abomination, perjury, blasphemy, etc. These men [they say] by preciseness and outward show of holiness, hypocrisy, vainglory and covetousness resemble or rather exceed the Pharisees.

And the 38th page of their *Discovery*: Such a priest as this is a blazing star, a paragon of a county, one of the new-found Martin-saints and such people as are puritans or Martinists, Presicians, etc.

And in the 193rd page they name the ministers of Geneva and their Church's classes (I dare not say the secret classes in England) do make ministers for us in England; and these ministers when they are come over are received and esteemed as angels in Hell and shine as bright stars in this smokey Egyptian furnace. And in the 12th page of their *Collection of Letters*, speaking of two very worthy preachers, they have these words:

"I suppose more corrupt teachers than these cannot be found in any age, they teaching almost nothing truly, much less sincerely."

To this we may refer the irreverent and malicious speech against the most godly-learned that have lived in the Reformed Churches beyond the seas, as in the 23rd page of their *Discovery* they call us the crooked disciples of master Calvin. And in the 18th page master Calvin has no doubt unsufferably perverted and wrested these and other places of Scripture and drawn very foul and corrupt doctrines thence touching the state and order of a planted Church and more dangerous and damnable conclusions from the same. And in the 33rd page this and such like detestable stuff has master Calvin in in his ignorance, partly to confute the Anabaptists, partly to defend his own rash and disorderly proceedings of Geneva, whereby this their Church became a just reproach to all men, yea, that which is worse and more to be lamented, it became a miserable precedent and pernicious example to all Europe.

The last note which we will observe for the trial of their spirit is their scurrilous and ruffian-like profaneness, wherein they seem to us to have expelled all persons that in a show of zeal and sincerity have written or dealt in the holy things of God:

In the 52nd page of their *Discovery*, speaking of ordination, they have these words:

“He solemnly sits in his chair and lays his simoniacal hands upon him, delivers the Bible into his hands, breathes upon him and gives, or rather sells him his unholy Ghost, as he shall know by the price of his box.”

In the 73rd page, having spoken against read, stinted prayers and being come to speak against the prayers which godly preachers do conceive according to the present occasions of the Church, thus they scoff at them:

“Other more smooth hypocrites, yet as gross idolaters, use the Lord's Prayer as a close or supply (forsooth) to their long, prolix prayers conceived before.”

In the 86th page of their *Refutation*, he [the minister] most sacrilegiously sells them his pretended sacrament for their second shot or offering. In the 97th and 98th page of their *Discovery*, speaking of our public fasts, thus they write:

“Here the learned priests and preachers lay their heads together, choose out three or four from among them to preach: some of them must play sin, another the judgments of God, the third repentance, the fourth the gospel; the people are solemnly bidden from all quarters to this stage play, who, at the first invention of it, flocked in thick and threefold to behold this novelty. He that plays sin, amongst some other faults, will reprove such as do not diligently enough countenance the preaching priests, (I should say) frequent not their sermons for the lack of the discipline, all that mourn in the chine [a small, secluded room] and sigh in secret for it (though neither priest nor people know what it means, yet) they must now fast and then the fault is not in them but in God-Almighty that they have it not.”

If you come now to the Second Table, they are severe men:

They will make conscience to tremble if there be ever a usurer or a drunkard or a whoremaster: they will so backbite him that he will not love a sermon a good while again. These men must bear with them if in the pulpit when they are ravished with the zeal of the Lord they have now and then a gird at them to ease their stomachs, especially now for fashion's sake.

And in the 99th page:

"When the P. P. [Popish or prelatie priest?] has ended, then are the people dismissed (where I think for that night is no talk either by the way, as they go home or at their supper, but how excellently such a man and such a man did). The priest himself that took these pains are bestowed at some good hosts or some good dance houses where at night they recompense their fasting and mourning with good cheer and ease."

And in the 180th page:

"They had a prescript place, like a tub, called their pulpit, and the preacher for the most part disputes to the hourglass, which being run his sermon-action must be at an end."

And a little after:

"Here would not be forgotten the sweet psalmical harmony of the vultures, crows, gledes, owls, geese, of the leopards, bears, wolves, dogs, foxes, swine, goats: all these with one accord, sympathy and harmony sing some pleasant ballad, or else unto David's melodious harp some psalm in time to stir up the spirits of their worthy priest or preacher, who being thus wrupt and ravished with this harmony goes to his gear in form above said where his mouth distills and his lips drop down old parables, etc."

And in the 191st page:

"Master Parson takes to him his pastoral staff or wooden dagger of superstition wherewith he keeps such a flourishing as the fly can have no rest, yea by your leave if any poor man in the parish offends him, he may peradventure go without his bread and wine for that day;"

and in the 192nd page, speaking of the bishops and dumb [silent, non-preaching] ministers: "Indeed their cake is dough, if this gear, this sweeping new reformation come in." In the 128th page, speaking of churching of women, they have these words: "She having offered her accustomed offering to him for his labor, [he will] Godspeed her well: she is a woman on foot again." And in the 244th page of their *Refutation* they call our prescript prayers "the smoke of the bottomless pit."

But what need we any further evidence or demonstration of their spirit? Sure we are that by this which is already set down it will well appear to the wise and Christian reader that God's Spirit never taught men to write as those men have done who are known to have been the chief persuaders and seducers of these our deceived brethren.

To conclude, if we did grant that the assemblies which these men have gathered and joined themselves unto were not equal only, but much better reformed than ours, yet by joining to them with disclaiming and condemning utterly all other reformed Churches in the world, we see not why they may not thereby be said to divide Christ [1 Cor. 1:13] as well as they of Corinth should have done if they joined unto and followed Paul, so as withal they forsook and despised Apollos or Cephas [1 Cor. 1:12-13].

The End

More Titles by Reformed Books Online

Articles

Rollock, Robert – “A Brief Instruction on the Eternal Approval & Disapproval of the Divine Mind” (1593/1594) 6 pp. tr. C. Johnson & T. Fentiman

Rogers, Richard – “A Sweet Meditation: A Poem on the Benefit of Reading, Conference, Musing on Holy Things & Prayer: containing a Complaint that these holy exercises are neglected for that which is worse than nothing, even men’s sinful will” in *Seven Treatises* (1603) 46 stanzas,

Alting, Henry – “A Disputation on the Light of Nature” tr. T. Fentiman (1628) 2 pp. 16 theses

Dyke, Jeremiah – “Of Quenching & Not Quenching of the Spirit” (d. 1620) 60 pp. a sermon on 1 Thess. 5:19

Calderwood, David – “Propositions on Indifferent Things & Ceremonies in Worship” tr. T. Fentiman (1623; 2021)

Westminster Assembly – “A Short Declaration of the Westminster Assembly, by Way of Detestation of the Doctrine that God is the Author of Sin” (1645) 6 pp.

Rutherford, Samuel

“A Defense of the Government of the Church of Scotland” in *A Peaceable & Temperate Plea for Paul’s Presbytery in Scotland* (1642), ch. 20 20 pp.

“Congregation does not have the Whole Power of the Keys of Church Government from Christ” in *A Peaceable & Temperate Plea for Paul’s Presbytery in Scotland* (1642) 36 pp.

“Samuel Rutherford on the Judicial Laws of Moses: Excerpts Arranged Topically” ed. T. Fentiman 32 pp.

“On the Baptism of the Children of Adherents” 29 pp. in *A Peaceable and Temperate Plea for Paul’s Presbytery in Scotland* (1642), ch. 12

Johnson, Thomas – “Stand up to your Christian Belief: Combat between Satan Tempting & a Christian Triumphant in the Comfort of the Apostles’ Creed, a Poem” (1640) 5 pp.

Burgess, Anthony

“Professing Christians are Externally in Covenant with God” 5 pp. in *Spiritual Refining* (1652), sermon 64, pp. 394–96

“On Vain Disputing” 13 pp. in *Spiritual Refining* (1652), sermons 2 & 51

Cheynell, Francis – “The Grounds of Christ the Mediator Receiving Divine Worship” (1650) 20 pp.

Dury, John – “A Summary Platform of the Heads of a Body of Practical Divinity” (1654) 12 pp.

Gouge, William – “On Covetousness” 18 pp. in *Commentary on Hebrews* (1655)

Gib, Adam

"Concerning the Gospel Call & the Warrant of Faith" 31 pp. in *The Present Truth: A Display of the Secession Testimony* (1747), vol. 2, Progression 5

"Christ's Mediatorial Kingdom & Common Benefits" 7 pp. in *The Present Truth: A Display of the Secession Testimony* (1747), vol. 2, Appendix 2, Section 4, pp. 299–302

Fentiman, Travis

"Theses on the Ethics of Civil Voting" (2024) 39 pp.

"An Introduction to Peter van Mastricht on Christ's Human Nature as Non-Personal, the Time of Ensoulment in the Womb & the Perpetual Virginity of Mary" (2024), pp. 1–9

"An Analysis of Rutherford and M'Crie on whether Ladies have the Right to Vote for Church Officers" (2015) 21 pp. with Rutherford and M'Crie appended on the subject

Books

Roberts, Francis – "Of God's Giving the Law on Mt. Sinai as a Covenant, and that of Faith" 90 pp. in *The Mystery and Marrow of the Bible: God's Covenants with Man, with an Introduction and Extended Outline* (1657), bk. 3, ch. 4, aphorism 2

Alexander, Archibald – *God, Creation & Human Rebellion: Lecture Notes of Archibald Alexander from the Hand of Charles Hodge* (1818; RHB, 2019; RBO, 2023) 150 pp. Forward by Maurice Roberts; Intro by James Garretson

Fentiman, Travis - *The Biblical Sabbath is from Dawn to Dawn* (2018) 100 pp.

For more titles see:

Books & Articles Exclusive to Reformed Books Online